

ILYA REPIN: IDEOLOGY AND AESTHETICS IN RUSSIAN ART

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ABSTRACT

Ilya Repin (1844-1930) was the leading member of the Russian realist school, the Peredvizhniki, widely regarded as the finest, and undoubtedly the most talented, painter of his generation. His work is largely seen, however, long suffered both from a partisan brand of Soviet art history, which seems to confirm his standing as a proponent of the propagandist school of Socialist Realism, and a further distortion of the Peredvizhniki, based on misconceptions of their role.

I DECLARE THAT THIS THESIS HAS BEEN COMPOSED BY MYSELF

AND THAT THE WORK HEREIN IS MY OWN

DAVID JACKSON

The first chapter deals with Repin's early development, from his birth in 1844 into a provincial military settlement, to his enrolment in 1861 at the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg, and considers the religious influence of the Academy, the professional artist based around Ivan Bryullov, and the emerging Peredvizhniki. Chapter 2 covers Repin's residency in Paris, 1873-1878, a period of conflicting influences during which his allegiance to the massive Russian school of critical realism was called into question by contact with Western art.

The central chapters, 3-5, consider the chief genres within Repin's output: history painting, scenes from contemporary life, satirical themes, and portraits, and consider to what degree ideological and formal considerations shaped his mature work.

Chapter 6 deals with Repin's artistic innovations from the 1880s onwards, a period of avowed aestheticism on Repin's part, which saw his repudiation of the Peredvizhniki, transference to the reformist Academy, and a brief liaison with Diaghilev's *Artelists*, but which ended in abject public disputes with the forces of 'modernity'.

Chapter 7 is devoted to the last decades of Repin's life, spent on his estate on the Finnish Gulf, a period of physical decline and post-revolutionary isolation during which he worked on his last major work, the portrait of the poet Pushkin.

The concluding chapter sums up the East/West view, considers the various influences on Repin's work, before assessing the overall significance of his work, and the contradictions within his oeuvre, based on the findings of previous chapters.

ABSTRACT

Ilya Repin (1844-1930) was the leading member of the Russian realist school, the Peredvizhniki, widely regarded as the finest, and undoubtedly the most celebrated, painter of his generation. His artistic legacy has, however, long suffered both from a partisan brand of Soviet art history, which seeks to confirm his standing as a precursor of the propagandist school of Socialist Realism, and a Western disregard of the Peredvizhniki, based on misconceptions regarding their motives.

In the East a continual stress on the socio-political nature of subject matter: content, ideology, meaning, has occasioned a lack of regard for aesthetic considerations, superfluous to the utilitarianism of Soviet art, whilst acceptance of this view in the West, during a century preoccupied with the non-narrative aspects of visual creation, has seen Repin stigmatised as an artistic ideologue, indifferent to formal considerations, and therefore of small importance to the history of 19th century art. Repin's inconsistent, often contradictory views on the aims and nature of art, have assisted the efforts of hagiographers and detractors alike, but these twin biases, which have long shadowed Russian art, have in Repin's case badly served a long and complex career by dint of crude or fallacious labelling. This thesis aims to seek a more judicious appreciation of Repin's worth through a comprehensive survey of his life and work, utilising as reference points the twin constituents of painting, form and content, which find reflection in the East/West proclivity towards ideology and aesthetics.

The first chapter deals with Repin's early development, from his birth in 1844 into a provincial military settlement, to his enrolment in 1864 at the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg, and considers the relative influences of the Academy, the secessionist *Artel* based around Ivan Kramskoy, and the emerging Peredvizhniki. Chapter 2 covers Repin's residency in Paris, 1873-1876, a period of conflicting interests during which his allegiance to the nascent Russian school of critical realism was called into question by contact with Western art.

The central chapters, 3-6, consider the chief genres within Repin's output: history painting, scenes from contemporary life, political themes, and portraiture, and consider to what degree ideological and formal considerations shaped his mature work.

Chapter 7 deals with reactions to artistic innovations from the 1890s onwards, a period of avowed aestheticism on Repin's part, which saw his resignation from the Peredvizhniki, transference to the reformed Academy, and a brief liaison with Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva*, but which ended in acrimonious public disputes with the forces of 'modernism'.

Chapter 8 is devoted to the last decades of Repin's life, spent on his estate on the Finnish Gulf, a period of physical decline and post-Revolutionary isolation, during which he worked obsessively on recurrent themes with a discernibly freer style.

The concluding chapter considers some of the East/West uses, abuses, and misunderstandings which have dogged Repin's work, before assessing the strengths and weaknesses, consistencies and contradictions within his oeuvre, based on the findings of previous chapters.

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INTRODUCTION

The student of Repin will find much in common with the student of Tolstoy. Both are confronted with an ever-expanding bibliography which continues to supplement the artist's own voluminous writings, and with having to evaluate a personal outlook which is at times bewildering in its contradictions. The student of Tolstoy might be thankful that he did not also resort to visual means of expression which, in Repin's case, form the core of a fascinating but spasmodically heterogeneous output.

The interests which form the basis of this thesis derive originally from research into 19th century Russian realism, and in particular the art of the Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок, or Peredvizhniki.¹ Like many before me I felt wholly dissatisfied with the apparent one-sidedness of Soviet accounts, not only of the Peredvizhnik school, but of realist art in general, where all concerns, it seems, are subordinated to a retrospective requirement to dovetail 19th century realism neatly with the pseudo-scientific triumph of Socialist Realism, making for one homogeneous, organic and indissoluble whole.

Such an approach leaves many casualties in its wake. As one of the leading members of the Peredvizhniki, undoubtedly the most famous and celebrated of his contemporaries, and disputably the finest painter Russia produced in the second half of the 19th century, Ilya Repin has been particularly ill-served by this limited view of art history. A closer scrutiny of Repin's visual and written output seemed to corroborate this: the more one investigates, the more he appears determined not to be neatly pigeon-holed or labelled. As both an artist and a writer he has a protean, mercurial character, which is hard to pin down, but which is certainly at odds with the stereotypical views of his work propounded in the East and West. To some extent Repin has been culpable for his own misrepresentation or neglect. With a judicious choice of canvases and selective quotations it is possible to make of the art and the artist whatever one wishes: a radical proto-revolutionary placing his art in the service of society, a nominally apolitical person, liberally-minded but equally

concerned with aesthetical and technical questions of art, a die-hard traditionalist, or one of an infinite number of intermediate shades between these polarities.

A better appreciation of his work seemed required, and as starting points the apparent antitheses of ideology and aesthetics are most appropriate, since they equate broadly to the East/West outlook on art which has been so injurious to Repin's reputation.

One is aware of the highly restricted strait-jacket within which the majority of Soviet art histories operate on learning that: "The emergence of the Itinerant movement can be properly understood only in the light of Lenin's theory of the capitalist development of Russia".² This severely hampers the scope for discussion. Repin, in common with other pre-Revolutionary realist artists, has been subjected to this socio-political need to retrospectively place his work within the emerging framework of Socialist Realism and communist doctrine. There is a tendency to over-emphasise Repin's revolutionary themes, which form an important but insubstantial part of his oeuvre, and though this is occasionally justified, at other times it appears exceedingly tenuous. This is most notable in the conversion of liberal or humanitarian sentiments into rigid social and political criticisms of the tsarist regime, or in unsubstantiated attempts to imbue apparently ambivalent works with a covert sedition, legible to the discerning viewer but, apparently, not to the official censor.

Repin's 'establishment' paintings, such as *Alexander III Receives the District Headmen* (1885, Ill. 64) and the grandiose *Formal Session of the State Council* (1903, Ill. 66) are passed off as biting exposés of an hypocritical regime with scant regard for the delight they instilled in patrons, sitters and public alike, whilst blatantly non-controversial works are easily categorised as painterly 'work-outs', a toning up and flexing of the artistic muscles in readiness for more significant works to come. Others might simply be ignored, a fate which has largely befallen Repin's religious subjects, although the genre occupied the artist, intermittently, from youth to his final days.

An overriding concern with the subject matter of art, and for the message it conveys, its ideology, has naturally led to the neglect of

aesthetical considerations, which are deemed largely superfluous. Soviet art historians are sometimes keen to indicate these aspects of an artist's oeuvre, but generally as a defensive measure, reproachful of Western art histories, which have been woefully negligent of Russian painting.³ Though Repin is occasionally credited with works which exhibit an awareness of progressive European trends, emphasising his awareness of contemporary developments and pre-empting Western accusations of insularity or ignorance, such considerations are limited exercises in the acquisition of artistic kudos, mentioned in passing and soon dropped in favour of the literary merits of a given canvas.

With this exception, or where the precedent is unimpeachable (Rembrandt, Hals and Velazquez for instance), investigations into connections and cross-fertilisations between Western and Russian art are generally discouraged. Emphasis is placed firmly on the autochthonic development of a purely national school of art. A motif which has run steadily through histories of Russian realist painting since before the Soviet period is that of the native artist unimpressed by the glories of the West, learning nothing from it, indeed often derisive of it, and who, cut off from his homeland, the *родина*, yearns to rush back to the arms of Mother Russia, there to devote himself to themes of a contemporary, national and socially critical nature.⁴ Repin has long been accused of a truculent, largely dismissive attitude towards Western art, largely due to misrepresentations which Vladimir Stasov, the eminent critic and art historian, found convenient for shaping the public image of the artist as a purely Russian phenomenon. This situation has been exacerbated during the intervening years by consistent, unquestioning Soviet repetitions of the charge.

Notwithstanding the wilful attempts to distort the character of Repin's artistic legacy, the genuine popularity of his paintings, still reproduced and sold in large numbers, has aided a concomitant lack of criticism. Irregularities in the standard of work, and ambivalence of intent, are largely overlooked. Possible contradictions are walked around without encounter. For instance, Repin entered the Academy in 1864 shortly after the celebrated "Бунт" or Revolt of the Thirteen⁵

against the stifling restrictiveness of that body, and was in close contact with members of the artists' *Artel*, established under Kramskoy's aegis shortly afterwards. Yet he did not join the *Peredvizhniki*, heirs to the *artel*'s ethos of an art unimpeded by administrative injunctions, until 1878, a full 14 years later. By then the *Peredvizhnik* school had firmly established itself as a viable alternative to the Academy. The implicit suggestion is that this radical amongst artists was guilty of playing safe, but this, and other sensitive questions, such as Repin's return to the reformed Academy in 1894, and his supposedly *laissez-faire* reactions to the political upheavals of 1905-1917, are areas of his career which receive scant attention.

Perhaps the most serious Soviet omission, which has most damaged Repin's reputation in Western eyes, has been the virtual denial that aesthetic considerations played a significant or positive part in shaping his artistic outlook.⁶ These concerns twice assumed priority for Repin during so-called "art for art's sake" phases: in Paris 1873-1876, and later during the 1890s when he benefitted from close contact with a younger generation of artists and was briefly involved with Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva*. This aspect of Repin's career is absolutely vital if one is to gain a complete and unbiased assessment of his artistic worth - or lack of it.

In the West the obscurity of Repin and his contemporaries is the chief hindrance to a greater understanding and appreciation of Russian painting. One wonders why this should be so when not only Repin, but numerous Russian painters of the 19th century, who consistently scored successes at well-attended and widely-reported Universal and International Expositions, could comfortably stand comparison with their European counterparts.

Art histories in the West have long been the obverse of the Russian coin, regarding everything from the standpoint of aesthetics to the detriment or derision of content as artistically irrelevant. For Repin the purely aesthetic approach to art history has been a perennial problem in shaping his image abroad. As early as 1873 when, as a young artist, he found international success with his painting *Bargehaulers*

on the Volga, or *Burlaki* (1870-73, Ill. 31), Stasov was apoplectic with the German artist and critic Friedrich Pecht, who excessively praised its treatment of light above all other exhibits, but who neglected to remark on the train of human pack-animals central to the canvas.⁷

The 20th century vogue for non-narrative art often results in the same lack of objectivity which characterises Soviet publications. Western writers comfortably sit in judgment on past art and artists from the standpoint of present-day preferences; a substitution of art criticism for art history. In the case of Russia the very obscurity of the art and artists involved is a source of ignorance which many writers cover by blindly repeating earlier opinions, rather than admit to a specific lack of knowledge.⁸ In dismissing Repin as an artist concerned with ideological content at the expense of aesthetical or experimental considerations, and therefore of no interest or importance to the history of art, one begins to feel that the West has swallowed wholesale the official Soviet line, rather than confronted the evidence of the paintings for themselves.

The francophile bias of art histories which address the 19th century is another barrier with which Repin's work has had to contend. Though this situation has been vigorously contested over the last decade or so, Repin's work has generally been subjected to unfavourable comparisons with the divine yardstick of Impressionism, and his apparent failure to respond to Western innovations on the art scene has been portrayed as at best ignorance, at worst wilful neglect. Stasov's vigorous efforts to press Repin into the nationalist mould have been a considerable hindrance here, as have been Repin's occasional intemperate forays into print, which tend to overshadow his more sensible, less controversial expressions of artistic faith.

What Repin seems to have particularly suffered from in the West is an approach towards art history which, like its Soviet counterpart, seeks to justify retrospectively the stylistic *mores* of the present: the reactions of the artist towards progressive events within his sphere of activity tell us a great deal and are not to be ignored, but this should not become a means for castigating those who did not feel compelled to embrace each and every changing artistic phase, fad or genuine development which, with the benefit of hindsight, are now

regarded as significant. A similar illogicality is exhibited in the persistent charge that Repin's work shows a lack of aesthetic sophistication, resorting to narrow, simplistically legible forms of communication, typical of Peredvizhnik canvases, in order to reach the widest possible audience. This line is seldom tested for consistency but nevertheless results in both Repin and large numbers of artists, often of disparate styles and temperaments, being faulted for a failure to attend to things which, even if the accusation is correct, they never sought to address.

In consistently judging Russian artists against their Western counterparts, with little or no attempt to place them within their own *milieu*, we run the risk of misunderstanding Russian art entirely. The old Westerner-Slavophile debate is alive and well here. Can we reasonably judge Russian artists in this way or were there social and political considerations which made for a considerably different artistic climate in Russia? As the artist Kramskoy remarked, in Russia, unlike Europe, artists were not "free as birds".⁹ There has been little attempt in the West however to dig deeper as to just why this state of affairs prevailed or how it affected the artistic output of the country.

These are just a few of the more prominent facets of twin schools of art history which have contributed to a misunderstanding and currently low appreciation of 19th century Russian art in the West, and which in the case of Repin have hindered serious consideration of one of the most prominent artists of the 19th century. To some extent the polarisation of East-West attitudes towards art history is a simplification since, naturally, discerning writers can be found on both sides of the cultural divide. Unfortunately these tend to be directed at specific aspects within the arts and it is still a regrettable fact that a student who approaches a general study of Russian art, whether from the East or West, will encounter these opposing philosophies. The latest full-blooded account of Russian art in English manages to find space for all of the apocryphal prejudices discussed above and in the section dealing with Repin the uninitiated will learn that he "remained narrowly chauvinistic", held a

"detestation of the French school", and was "completely lacking in any kind of consideration as to the true nature of painting, its purpose or its aims."¹⁰ (Just what the true nature and purpose of painting is we are not told).

This art historical bias has dogged Russian art for years and, in the case of Repin, has badly served a long, complex and often inconsistent career by crudely grafting neatly packaged absolutes onto a continually shifting artistic nature. Since the irregularities, contradictions and misconceptions from both camps will form a staple part of this thesis I have refrained from citing too many examples here. These will be dealt with as and where they arise, though it is not my desire to digress into a general comparative survey of the opposing views of individual art historians. These will be quoted where apposite, as evidence of the East/West dogma discussed above, but otherwise this state of affairs will be treated as existing. Nor is it my intention to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the social, political or cultural reasons which have led to a channelling of art history into narrow confines,¹¹ but to show that neither of these basically entrenched viewpoints can be sustained, and by a thorough examination of the evidence available to seek a better appraisal of Repin's work than those currently on offer.

And whilst comparisons with other artists and artistic movements, and with the social and personal influences on the artist will be taken into full consideration, this is not my main thrust.¹² My chief intent is to utilize the twin constituents of painting; form and content, style and subject matter, aesthetics and ideology, as reference points from which to scrutinize the complexities, strengths and weaknesses, consistencies and contradictions, of a highly fascinating and individual artist whose career spanned over seventy years; some of the most radical, innovatory and exciting years in the development of art.

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A pleasure of my research has been to discover that a list of acknowledgements is not merely a literary convention but an opportunity to record a debt of gratitude to the many individuals who have generously contributed their knowledge, efforts or simply enthusiasm for the project in hand.

I am most grateful to the Scottish Education Department who financed research visits to Moscow and Leningrad as well as subsequent trips to view paintings and make use of library resources in Helsinki, Stockholm and Oxford. I am particularly indebted to Mr Valdemar Melanko, Director of the Institute for Cultural Relations between Finland and the USSR, who arranged for accommodation and permission to make use of the facilities at the Slavonic Library within Helsinki University, and who, as the translator of the Finnish edition of Repin's memoirs, generously took time out of a busy schedule to discuss the artist's work with me.

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The closure of the Tretyakov Gallery due to lengthy renovations presented a major problem during my research, and since many scholars have experienced long delays, or simply been unable to gain access to the collections there, I shall be eternally grateful to Mirra Nemirovskaya and Tatyana Gubanova who, at short notice and with seeming ease, arranged for me to select and view works at my leisure.

from the Gallery's storage rooms. In particular I wish to thank Galina Churak who guided me around the collection giving me the benefit of her authority on Repin's associations with Moscow, and who went out of her way to ensure that I saw important or little known works which had been temporarily removed. Whilst still uncertain as to how I achieved this administrative coup I am beholden to those who effected it.

I wish also to thank the anonymous *dezhurnaya* at the Bolshoi zal of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow, who, when senior staff denied its existence, guided me safely to where Repin's *Slavonic Composers* hung. To her, and to all the other unnamed officials on whose kindly backs this research is built, I am sincerely grateful.

My search for individual canvases led me to many foreign institutions and though I cannot account for them all I would like particularly to thank the staff at the Ateneum, Helsinki: Helmi Riitta Sariola, Timo Keinänen, Heikki Malme and Tuula Arkio, the Director of Retretti, Jouko Heinonen, A. Leshinsky of the Estonian Art Museum, Tallinn, Jirí Kotalík, Director of the Narodnie Gallery, Prague, Betsy Rosasco of the Art Museum, Princeton University, and Mr Shri A.N. Mukherjee of the Victoria Memorial Hall Calcutta.

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Assistance in locating rare, unusual or lost works was provided by a number of auction houses which alerted me to the appearance of sale items by Repin and provided me with copies of their catalogues: Sotheby's and Christie's, London, Huutokauppa Auction House, Helsinki, Bukowski's of Stockholm, and Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Copenhagen.

I would like especially to acknowledge my gratitude to a number of individuals. Mr Magnus Mansson very kindly tolerated my intrusion of his private collection on a number of occasions and volunteered to place materials and books within his library at my disposal. His generosity and trust towards a then total stranger will always be much

appreciated.

Mrs Josephine Pasternak graciously invited me to be her guest for a few days in late 1988, ostensibly to discuss her father Leonid's relationship with Repin, but was subsequently kind enough to give me the benefit of her wide knowledge of the Russian arts on a number of related topics during a series of helpful and enlightening conversations, for which I thank her.

It has been my great honour over the last few years to find a friend in Mrs Irina Prehn, who has inspired my endeavours. I thank her initially for allowing me to make use of the unpublished memoir left by her late husband, the artist Eric Prehn, who visited Repin in the 1920s, for subsequently guiding me to useful source materials which would otherwise have escaped my attention, and for numerous loans of Russian books from her collection. Her unassuming but extensive knowledge of the culture of her native country has been of inestimable value on a wide range of interrelated topics which would be impossible to acknowledge at each turn, but which I have nevertheless enjoyed.

Professor Dennis Ward, my academic supervisor, has provided unobtrusive but authoritative guidance throughout my period of research, and has shown a depth of understanding and degree of patience during difficult periods which went beyond reasonable expectations. He has proved throughout a valuable visual safeguard, a second pair of eyes against artistic errors, and I shall always be thankful for the wisdom and kindness with which he has guided my scholarly pretensions.

My wife Sarah has endured my protracted, mature studenthood, with a mixture of stoicism, good humour and continued enthusiasm, and has given me the continued benefit of her fresh insight when artistic over-familiarity threatened to dull the critical senses. Without her boundless support this research would simply not have been possible.

It remains only to observe that other literary convention of assuming responsibility for all errors, omissions and prejudices of opinion contained herein, which I do willingly.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

In the notes Russian sources are cited in Cyrillic. With rare exceptions Russian forms appear in transliteration throughout the main text (see key below). Proper names, however, appear in commonly accepted forms, e.g. Tolstoy, Kramskoy, Tchaikovsky, Diaghilev, Makovsky, Kerensky, etc.

A few inconsistencies have arisen in transliterating picture titles due to my adherence to the catalogue of Repin's works in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Paintings, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985). 'Запорожцы', for instance, is corruptly transliterated as in *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*. This has been done for the sake of homogeneity amongst pictures which are often given widely varying titles and, hopefully, will not prove too much of a distraction. Otherwise I have striven to be consistent. All errors are therefore involuntary but mine.

А	a	Н	n
Б	b	О	o
В	v	П	p
Г	g	Р	r
Д	d	С	s
Е	ye initially and after vowels, otherwise e.	Т	t
Ё	yo initially, after vowels and all consonants except ч, ш, ж, щ, where o.	У	u
Ж	zh	Ф	f
З	z	Х	kh
И	i	Ц	ts
Й	i	Ч	ch
К	k	Ш	sh
Л	l	Щ	shch
М	m	Ы	y
		Э	e
		Ю	yu
		Я	ya

In the account of his early life Repin paints a gritty, disconsolate tale of personal privations, hard labour, cold and hunger. Repin's father, Yefim (1804-1894) was an army private with some 17 years service and it was into the harsh environment of the Chuguyev military settlement of his regiment, in Ekaterin Province, that Ilya, the second of four children, was born in 1844. These

CHAPTER 1

Childhood and Youth: 1844-1863

It can be dangerous to attach too much cultural weight to the experiences and impressions of childhood. The temptation to review the past with hindsight and to attribute significant attitudes and philosophies to early experiences is all too obvious. Conversely, it can be equally misplaced to underestimate the formative years which, in the case of Russian artists of Repin's generation, there is good cause to consider as being more than usually influential.

Unlike their University-educated counterparts in music and literature, the majority of artists came from the poorest backgrounds and lowest of castes in Russia's rigidly tiered social system: at best from the *мещанство* or *petite bourgeoisie*, more readily, as in Repin's case, from the peasantry. To these alone belonged the privileges of direct taxation, arbitrary liability for conscription or for public labour, restriction of movement and, ultimately, the ignominy of corporal punishment. It would be small wonder if such a background did not in some manner mark the mature artist.

The only first-hand account we have of Repin's childhood and youth is his own, first published in 1914.¹ One must proceed cautiously with a childhood memoir written at the age of 70, especially since Repin had by then lived through the time when peasant ancestry was a cause of shame, to one where the peasant was lionised as the embodiment of all that was pure, simple and best in Russian nationalistic values. Whereas the artist Kramskoy confessed in 1880² to a sense of social inferiority, due to the lack of a proper education, by 1926 Repin felt the need to rebuke a foreign biographer who elevated his ancestry: "My father was never an officer", pronounced the mortified artist, "just a common private with the Chuguyev Ulan Regiment."³

In the account of his early life Repin paints a gritty, disconsolate tale of personal privations, hard labour, cold and hunger. Repin's father, Yefim (1804-1894) was an army private with some 27 years service and it was into the harsh environment of the Chuguyev military settlement of his regiment, in Kharkov Province, that Ilya, the second of four children, was born in 1844. These

establishments, founded under the auspices of Count Arakcheyev in 1810, an ardent supporter of autocratic supremacy, served a dual function, combining military and agrarian service to make regiments more self-supporting, reducing the crippling costs of maintaining a standing army. Living conditions were generally higher than the average, but the serfs who were drafted into the settlements were subject to military rules, regulations and discipline and at an early age children were separated from their parents, enrolled and uniformed to begin military education as 'cantonists'.⁴ The life was harsh and oppressive and the not infrequent revolts were brutally crushed.

Repin recalled his father as an aloof figure, constantly away from home, remaining on the lowest of ranks due to an early rudeness inflicted on an officer. His saving grace was an affinity with horses much prized and utilised by his regiment. For a while the Repin family were relatively well off due to Yefim's trading, but at the start of the 1860s his entire stock was wiped out by an epidemic, reducing the family to penury afresh.

Repin's mother, Tatyana Stepanova, was the mainstay of the family. A resourceful woman, she taught the village children their three Rs, took scripture classes with the aid of the local sexton, augmented the family's income by making rabbit fur coats, which she sold to the local peasant women, and still maintained her obligatory work on the settlement, mixing clay, cow-dung and straw for building materials. Over sixty years later Repin recalled with vivid shame and anger the repeated indignities and verbal abuse which his mother endured from various petty officials.⁵ Troops and horses were often billeted on the family and on one occasion Repin's mother was violently intimidated by an overseer, in her own home, for neglecting work in favour of her sick children. These were overwhelming emotions for a young child to ingest and such powerful memories became etched in Repin's mind, undoubtedly contributing towards his humanitarian predisposition.

In 1854, at the age of 10, Repin entered the Military Topographical School in Chuguyev, thus saving him from more mundane military duties. His mother could hardly have failed to divine even at such an early age the attributes that were already shaping her son's future as, ever preoccupied with one form or other of artistic creation, the young boy

decorated the family's windows and furniture with paintings and paper cut-outs of flora and fauna.

It was whilst still a boy, during a visit from his cousin Trofim Chaplygin, that Repin got his first taste of real watercolour paints. He relates, in breathless prose, his sheer wonder as Trofim dexterously breathed life into a drawing of a water-melon, gently laying in the pink and red tones with the green and, a final gracing touch, animating the dead page by speckling the fruit with dark seeds. "A miracle! a miracle!"⁶ Repin recalled. Throughout his long life he never lost a fascination and wonderment for the process of painting, investing it with an autonomous, mystical, almost religious quality.

At the Military Topographical School Repin came under the guidance of V.V. Geitsyg and F.A. Bondarev and recalled his training there as something of an idyll. The school was generously subsidised, being well stocked with the best paints and materials from London, but in 1857 the school, along with the system of military settlements, was abolished.

Intent on an artistic career, Repin began training in church icon techniques and subjects. He was apprenticed to Ivan Mikhailovich Bunakov, a local master, and by all accounts, an artist of true gifts.⁷ Chuguyev, according to Repin, was famed for the artists who graduated from its local academy and his pupil and biographer, Igor Grabar, expressed great respect for the high quality of work practised in the province.⁸

Chief amongst the provincial artists, and with Bunakov the greatest influence on the young Repin, was Leonty Ivanovich Persanov, the 'Raphael of Chuguyev'. He was the first person who actively encouraged Repin to study directly from nature, upbraiding him for copying from a print that which he could see with his own eyes; on this occasion a landscape not dissimilar to the one outside Repin's own classroom window.⁹

Persanov's own works, chiefly landscapes and portraits, were indelibly stamped with the soft, romantic and slightly stilted Biedermeier style of provincial painting of the 1840s-50s, but are accomplished pieces. Repin later recalled his indebtedness both to Bunakov and Persanov in stating that Chuguyev had been his first

academy, his basic training in painterly technique.¹⁰ Here he found teaching by example rather than system, and an atmosphere of kindly but serious and sustained encouragement.

Between 1859-1863 Repin moved on to independent work around Chuguyev and beyond, becoming an itinerant, self-supporting artist, fulfilling portrait and church commissions. His work was not always done to satisfaction and contractors complained that he too frequently departed from the conventional forms, utilizing excessive light, colour and expression. But there were also successes, chiefly his depiction of Mary Magdalene, adapted from a print by Pompeo Batoni, in which Repin transferred her sitting pose to a more ecstatic standing one, with great effect, reportedly moving the locals to tears.¹¹

In August of 1861 he was active in the village church at Malinovo near Chuguyev, painting a large Crucifixion from an engraving by K. K. Schteiben, and throughout that autumn and winter painted icons in a number of local churches.¹² In 1863 he worked in Voronezh province restoring the ancient iconostasis of the church at Sirotin, a major undertaking, in which he impressed those about him by his diligence, zeal and ability, working a regular 13 hour day perched precariously on high scaffolding. It was here that he first heard the name of Ivan Kramskoy, who would later become his friend and mentor, and was fired to copy the artist's achievements by gaining entrance to the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg. Repin amassed 100 roubles from the commission, giving him the financial means to set his ambition in motion, and in November 1863 he left for the capital.

Of Repin's artistic output during these years, one can draw few conclusions. Only a handful of his earliest works survive and, since this was naturally a period of acquiring and consolidating technical expertise, it is not surprising to find that these are largely derivative of those from whom he learned.

The earliest work, a watercolour depicting the Military Topographical School in 1857, is the product of a thirteen year old and can tell us little beyond the fact that Repin obviously had an early artistic talent.¹³ From the period of study under Bunakov and Persanov and of his church commissions, 1858-1863, little is known: attribution can be at best doubtful and the village church commissions

were reportedly all destroyed during World War II. A few religious paintings of the period have been identified, including icons of *Christ in the Crown of Thorns* (1858), and of *The Virgin and Infant* (1862).¹⁴ Both are entirely conventional and suggest none of the improvisation which Repin claimed for his church commissions.

Of far greater interest are his secular portraits, chiefly of family and relatives. These show the same slightly naive execution and doll-like poses of the Chuguyev school, but suggest that the work of the young Repin was by no means inferior to that of his tutors. I. N. Shamanov, for instance, was one of Repin's teachers at Chuguyev and an artist whom he greatly admired,¹⁵ yet if one compares Repin's portrait of his aunt A. S. Bocharova, done in 1859, with Shamanov's *Major Kupriyanov and His Wife* of 1860, Repin's work is by far more natural and finely drawn, suggesting an early impulse towards what Persanov had preached, namely looking at the subject afresh rather than through the eyes of a traditional style.¹⁶

According to Repin he was already exhibiting a critical tendency during his teens, tampering with the prescribed formula of a minor but time-honoured theme, *The Three Prelates*. By devoting a preponderance of time and effort on rendering the clerical accoutrements, he tried to hint at clerical worldliness, but it apparently went unnoticed. Repin described it as "a boring, commonplace, well-worn subject" but noted that "even the fault-finding father failed to notice the charlatanism of the young artist: everybody was pleased with my bold icon."¹⁷ Repin is naturally the only witness to this event who ventured into print and since he was viewing events from a distance of over fifty years one might take his audaciousness with a pinch of salt. If true however it would be only the first of numerous future occasions when an apparently critical piece of painting was warmly received by the intended target or its representatives.

From his formative years, between childhood and his arrival in St. Petersburg in 1863, aged 19, Repin appears to have gained two things: a solid grounding in artistic technique from one of the best provincial schools in the country and a good deal of practical experience as a self-supporting painter of portraits and church icons. Though one might reserve judgment on the critical sentiments expressed

in his work there is no doubting that many of the future attitudes which would mark his mature work were already formed by his experiences up to this point: the cruel and arbitrary nature of the military settlement, the petty tyranny and abuses suffered by his family and, most pertinently, an acute awareness of his lowly social standing.

Shortly before he departed from Kursk province he also received his first small taste of the social elevation which his chosen profession offered. At Sirotin, during a dinner to bless the restored iconostasis, he queried being seated indoors with the clergy, rather than outside, on the grass, with the rest of the workers. "But one could hardly compare them with you," he was told, "they are artisans, you are an artist!"¹⁰

Aesthetically the influence of Chuguyev was soon succeeded by a formal academic training, but ideologically Repin clearly regarded this period of his life as being of great personal significance. Time and time again he would relate his outlook on life, his social and political stances, to events recalled from his childhood and youth.

St. Petersburg 1863-1873

Repin arrived in the capital only a few days after an event which was to transform the face of Russian art. The secession by 14 students from the Imperial Academy, an audacious but possibly foolhardy gesture, was later to be considered the decisive point at which the slowly developing realist and critical strands in the visual arts finally cut free from a restrictive Academic patrimony to pursue other, more socially relevant ends.

But for the nineteen year old Repin, arriving from the provinces, this culturally transforming event passed him by for many months. The authorities in fact suppressed printed reference to the so-called 'revolt', but he was anyway preoccupied with fulfilling an ambition, gaining entrance to the Imperial Academy of Arts, which from an early age he had come to regard as the pinnacle of artistic achievement, and on arrival he made immediate pilgrimage to the Vasilyev Island, there to behold his nirvana.¹¹

Other, more prosaic considerations, also claimed his attention, namely the pressing problems of accommodation and subsistence. He first took lodgings with the architect A.D. Petrov, a distant relative, and later moved to the house of A.A. Shevtsov, a relative of Petrov's who taught at the Imperial Lapidary Works. Financial subsistence proved an elusive quarry as Repin found that his artistic services were not required amidst the superfluity of icon painters in the capital. "In order not to starve", he recalled, "I took to all kinds of work, decorating the iron roofs of houses, carriages, even iron buckets...".²⁰

Petrov curbed Repin's initial disenchantment and dissuaded him from an ignominious flight back to Chuguyev after he was rejected by Fyodor Lvov, the Conference Secretary at the Academy, who decided his work was not up to entry standards. Instead Repin enrolled at the drawing school of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, an erstwhile independent body, formed under royal patronage in 1820 in the best traditions of amateur zeal, but by 1845 subordinated to the all-powerful Academy. It continued to function as an ostensibly separate school for those seeking a preparatory course for entry to the Academy, and whilst it too taught the classical tradition and a mistrust of artistic experimentation, the atmosphere was more intimate and relaxed. Here Repin first met Kramskoy, who, popular with the students, taught a packed drawing class.²¹

Repin was later encouraged to re-submit for entrance to the Academy and was introduced by Shevtsov to General F.I. Pryanishnikov, a noted collector of Russian painting active within the St. Petersburg Association for the Promotion of the Arts, as a prospective patron.²² Repin recalled his fear and trembling waiting in the general's ante-room and how, when he agreed to become his benefactor and offered his hand, Repin was moved to tears and instinctively fell to his knees, kissing the hem of the general's satin dressing gown.²³ One could hardly want for a more graphic example of the wide social gulf which existed between the majority of artists and the class which governed the artistic establishments.

In January 1864 Repin passed the Academy's examination in drawing and began attending lectures without the formal status of student. In

September he passed the examination of general subjects but continued to attend the drawing school where his friendship with Kramskoy was strengthened. Here he was introduced to the artists' *Artel*, established by Kramskoy and the other secessionists. Kramskoy was to exercise enormous influence on Repin's career, as a teacher and artistic thinker,²⁴ and with hindsight Repin recalled his evenings spent at the *Artel* as being more significant than his formal training. There seems little doubt that much of his future thinking on the nature and aims of his art owe more to the free-thinking atmosphere of the *Artel* than to the rigid, learning-by-rote system of the Academy, though the latter might take the credit for Repin's technical excellence.

The cultural background to the 'Revolt' of the 14: intellectual turbulence and Academic hegemony

During the 18th century the slow rise of a realist tradition outside of the Academy was taking shape. In the 1760s I. A. Yermenev (1746-after 1779) depicted scenes of rural and urban poverty, and in the 1770s Mikhail Shibanov (d. after 1789) included peasants, albeit of a more prosperous variety, in his canvases. The Academy however did not recognise the lower orders as fit subjects for art and there occurred a hiatus of nearly fifty years before Alexei Venetsianov (1780-1847), working with greater naturalism, firmly established the genre. To pursue such subject matter Venetsianov was compelled to eschew the Academy and establish an independent school, a singular rarity in its day. Pavel Fedotov (1815-1852) is credited with introducing a discernibly critical note into Russian painting, filling a brief and tragic life with Hogarthian scenes satirizing the foibles of the middle-classes and rampant abuses of bureaucracy. An important influence on this emerging tradition was Vasily Perov (1833-1882), who depicted poverty, hunger, drunkenness, prostitution and death, and who attacked official abuses with unprecedented gusto. His most celebrated work, *The Village Easter Procession* (1861, Ill. 1), a detailed depiction of rural poverty and drunken priests, caused great offence and was withdrawn from exhibition.

Amongst other artists of the mid 19th century, pushing forward the limits of acceptable subject matter whilst, covertly or otherwise, weaving strains of social discord into their narratives, was Valery Yakobi (1836-1902), who painted a wretched and bedraggled group of Siberian-bound political convicts in *Prisoners' Halt* (1861, Ill.2), causing a predictable uproar. Vasily Pukirev's *The Unequal Marriage* (1862, Ill.3) portraying the wedding of an aged wealthy groom to his young and impoverished bride, reputedly shamed a number of real-life generals out of marrying in similar circumstances.²⁵

The visual arts lagged behind, but followed the intellectual path traced by writers such as Pushkin, Griboyedev and Gogol, and by critical thinkers such as Belinsky, Pisarev, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. As the so-called 'lower orders' were incorporated into the painterly province, so artists began heeding injunctions to cease their Academic preoccupation with religion, antiquity and mythology, and to embrace contemporary, relevant themes, during a period of discernible historic and social change. The liberation of the serfs in 1861, Russia's rapid industrialisation, the rise of the *raznochintsy*, the non-noble intelligentsia to which the new thinkers belonged, were significant events which demanded to be chronicled over the dearth of irrelevant, socially divorced Academic products.

Chernyshevsky, 'the father of the Russian intelligentsia', was particularly significant, notably with his doctoral dissertation of 1853, *The Aesthetic Relationship of Art to Reality*. Although associated with the realist, pro-utilitarian ethics of Belinsky and Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky set the yard-stick by which so much of the future art would be judged. Belinsky had qualified his utilitarianism and held that art should be a confluence of aesthetics and ideology:

"...art must first of all be art, and only then may it be an expression of the spirit and direction of society...Whatever the beautiful thoughts that fill a poem...if it has no poetry it can have neither beautiful thoughts nor problems, and all one may note in it is good intention, badly fulfilled."²⁶

Chernyshevsky demoted aesthetic considerations to maintain that art, like science, stands below reality and should therefore direct its efforts to understanding, explaining and passing judgment on it. Having done so it should place its findings at the disposal of society, not just a chosen few.²⁷

Vladimir Stasov, the art historian and critic, waged journalistic war on the representatives of conservative forces from the 1850s onwards, agitating for a socially involved, national school of art, both in music, for which he famously championed the 'mighty five' composers, and in the visual arts. He whole-heartedly concurred with the French political thinker Proudhon, and with Courbet, who had put into practice many of Proudhon's precepts, that art needed to be contemporary, alive, socially relevant. To follow such a path the restraints of the Academy clearly had to be lifted.

Stasov's early writings on art appeared in St. Petersburg periodicals from the 1850s onwards. In an article in *Современные летописи*²⁸ in September 1861, he rejoiced that the Academic exhibition of that and preceding years confirmed an irrevocable shift towards his way of thinking. Perov had been antagonising the public since the appearance of his *Arrival of a Rural Police Officer at an Investigation* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1857), and in 1861 he exhibited *The Village Easter Procession* and *Village Sermon* (Tretyakov Gallery), both critical of the church and its unthinking, hypocritical adherents, which were seen in company with Yakobi's *Prisoners' Halt*, prompting Stasov to declare:

"...our art has at last applied itself to our own subjects, concerns and problems. How, one asks in astonishment, has our art not previously drawn on Russian subjects and problems?...I do not know who made the miracle which is now happening in our art and literature, striving for new paths, to advance society...At all events the change is most perceptible and it is impossible to doubt that it has begun to be strongly felt, and the exhibition has suddenly taken on a completely different meaning."²⁹

By the early 1860s those artistic trends which were antipathetic towards academicism had gained considerable ground, but whereas music and literature forged ahead, at the time of the secession in 1863 the Imperial Academy was still the dominant voice in Russia, and it would

be hard to envisage a more conservative force than this. What began under Catherine in 1764 as a method of producing well educated artists, remained unchanged until Nicholas I brought it under royal control. A man of Neo-Classical tastes, he had a keen interest in the arts and exhorted students to toe the line and further their careers via state commissions. Artistic ranks were made analogous to the civil service, the Tsar retained the right to hire and fire professors, and of course artists were subject to the state censor. Nicholas also added a policeman to the staff and enforced strict barrack-like discipline, including an amendment to the statutes providing punishment of up to 25 years military service for malcontents.

Control over the Academy's affairs was further increased by appointing members of the Imperial family to key posts, most notably in 1852, when Grand Duchess Maria, Nicholas' daughter, was made President. In 1850 the Ministry of the Imperial Household arrogated administration of the Academy from the Ministry of Education and, through a nationwide programme of central supervision gained an asphyxiating hegemony over the visual arts in Russia.³⁰

The Moscow School of Arts, from which Perov emerged, remained a unique but only partially independent exception, extravagantly described by Alexander Benois as a place where "absolute freedom, at times degenerating into confusion and looseness, reigned supreme."³¹ Established in 1833 as an informal venue for art classes, it passed to Academic control in 1843 as the price for being granted the status of an official training centre for the arts. It remained a subordinate institution, conferring only the lowest rank upon its graduates: all else, including medals and prizes, remained the Academy's privilege. Notwithstanding, the school was regarded as being less restrictive and therefore more attractive to many students.

Under Alexander II a belated attempt to reform the Academy was made. In 1859 the military and bureaucratic ethos was relaxed but the rigid six-year training scheme, which forbade life drawing until the latter part of a student's education, still revolved around the conferment of ranks, titles and prizes, and students were denied individual instruction in favour of large, impersonal gatherings under liveried, aloof professors. The re-establishment of general education

classes, discontinued in 1840 to the intellectual detriment of the students, was a welcomed measure. But the chief bone of contention, artistic freedom, remained, and contributed to the secession in 1863.

The secession from the Academy and formation of the Artists' Artel

A month before the scheduled competition date for the Grand Gold Medal, and following a steady flow of articles inciting artists to more socially relevant and critical subject matter, the competing students petitioned the Academic Council for the right to select their own subject matter. On the eve a strong stimulus to the revolt appeared, an article by I.I. Dmitriev, a follower of Dobrolyubov, which fiercely attacked the servility of artists, likening their thralldom to obligatory competition themes to artistic serfdom.³²

Receiving no reply to their petition the students attended the competition on 9th November, rejected the official slips on which were written the judges' chosen theme, and asked to be awarded diplomas and the lowest graduating rank of 'artist'.³³ The negative reaction was predictable since all forms of striving towards greater freedom and individuality were regarded as at best suspicious and at worst subversive. The dissenting students were certainly regarded in the latter category, not merely because they chose to defy an august institution with imperial connections, but because the gesture was one which required great personal sacrifice, the Academy being virtually the sole guarantor of a livelihood in a country where private patronage was virtually non-existent.

Surprisingly though, Kramskoy's writings suggest that the 14 had little more in mind than the need for freedom of artistic expression. The debate was not about style, and only in part about subject matter, the sticking point was the denial of freedom of choice.³⁴

In line with events in industry, and with Chernyshevsky's notorious novel of 1862, *Что делать?*, an artist's *Artel*, or cooperative was formed, the artist's capitalising themselves by dedicating 10% of private income and 25% of all commissions received through the *Artel*.³⁵ Financial survival was a struggle and various types of routine work, such as painting portraits from photos, or retouching photos, were taken on to supplement individual artistic efforts. These

were largely scenes of social and domestic genre, suggesting an inclination towards liberally-minded reform movements of the 1860s, rather than the acidic, highly politicised polemics of writers like Dubrolyubov, to whom they are often mistakenly tied.

The relationship between the *Artel* and the Academy is a complex and often misunderstood one, which few writers manage to balance. The brave gesture of the dissenters was certainly a slap in the face for the Academy and for some years to come members of the *Artel* were the subject of police surveillance and interrogation.³⁶ Yet ties with the Academy were never fully severed: in 1869 Kramskoy received the rank of academician and not a few years later, when the *Peredvizhniki* were founded, their inaugural exhibition of 1871 took place within the Academy's halls. Members of the *Artel* had a vested interest in keeping their ties with the Academy alive, since the preferment of rank and the distribution of commissions was something which they simply could not afford to fully divorce themselves from. But why the Academy should take such an apparently easy-going attitude towards them is a matter which points to the intricacy of feelings at the time and should discourage prevalent portrayals of the *Artel* members as subversive followers of radical politics, hell-bent on smashing the detested symbol of tsarist artistic repression.

The only point which can be made in favour of the Academy at this time is that the restriction on competition themes was regarded as the only means of providing objective criteria by which to judge the winners. The practise was designed with good intentions but had deteriorated into a no-compromise state of siege mentality. The Academy is sometimes credited with conceding ground to the calls for more socially relevant subject matter since in 1863 the 14 who seceded could have tackled the Gold Medal subject in the less prestigious genre section, *The Liberation of the Serfs*. To this extent it has been suggested that discontent with the Academy was not the sole cause of the revolt.³⁷ This view fails to take stock of two salient facts: firstly, that the professors who set this theme more likely had in mind a grandiloquent portrayal of Imperial largesse than a depiction of the wretched masses receiving their birthright, and secondly, that

the issue, as Kramskoy had indicated, was freedom, for which concessions were a poor substitute.

Repin and the Artel: early intellectual contacts

In his memoirs Repin diminishes the role of the Academy, crediting the *Artel* with the greatest influence on his early development.³⁸ At Kramskoy's invitation he was initiated into the open-house 'Thursdays', at which sessions of sketching were augmented with selected readings. In a passage much quoted in Soviet monographs Repin recalled the relaxed and liberal atmosphere, stressing the depth and breadth of their intellectual interests:

"And here, in the common-room of the artists' studio, there seethed such heated conversation and arguments on each and every public affair. All of them avidly studied the latest articles: *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality* by Chernyshevsky, *The Destruction of Aesthetics* by Pisarev, *Art* by Proudhon... *Essays on the Formation of Character* by Owen, Buckle, Draper, Vogt, Moleschott, Büchner and many others."³⁹

In relation to Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, Repin cites two works which were later to be regarded as of seminal importance to the development of critical realism in the arts, so one must remain alive to the possibility that the *Artel* common room, viewed from the early twentieth century, acquired greater significance than it had at the time. But it cannot be doubted that the *Artel* was a counterbalance to the more traditional influence of his Academic course which occupied the bulk of his time. The constant need for subsistence and Repin's desire to further his woefully inadequate education left him little time to dabble at length with the *Artel*, though it remained a valuable source of second opinion when artistic doubts struck.⁴⁰

Repin's realisation of how intellectually unfitted he was for the emerging role of the artist as social commentator, saw him embark on a sustained programme of educational improvement, enrolling in all of the Academy's general courses.⁴¹ Outside, and in addition to the *Artel*, Repin benefitted from mixing with artists both younger and older than himself. Shevtsov's son Aleksandr was also attending drawing school and twice a week Repin and his fellow students congregated at the apartment of their colleague, the sculptor Mark

Antokolsky, for sessions of sketching and reading in imitation of the *Artel*. In his biography of Antokolsky, Stasov recalled their self-education course:

"They worked and studied together, not only art, but the sciences, anything which interested them or seemed necessary; they read together (most of all Proudhon, Buckle, Darwin and historical novels) and together visited museums."⁴²

Repin and the Academy: official paintings and growing independence

Repin's academic studies got off to an ignominious start. His financial position continued to be desperate and in March 1865, only seven months into his course, he made a despondent and obsequious appeal to the Conference Secretary P.F. Iseev which, despite its impassioned tones, went unanswered.⁴³ A few minor commissions and occasional pupils were fitted in around the hectic schedule he devised for himself, but Repin's time at the Academy was characterised by continual want.

The revolt of the 14 appears not to have dented the Academy's resolve. Repin's training consisted of the old diet of compulsory themes from the Bible, history or mythology in conventional, stereotypical compositions. The director at the time was Fyodor Bruni, renowned for his vast religious and historical themes, executed to stylistic and compositional precepts, rather than individual interpretation. Repin was much in awe of the great Bruni but found his methods mechanical. During a studio session, working on a sketch for his painting *Tobias Anointing the Eyes of His Blind Father*, Bruni advised that Repin rectify the imperfect composition by cutting out the figures and rearranging them, whilst on another occasion Bruni praised Repin's Small Gold Medal sketch *Diogenes Throws Away his Cup on Seeing a Young Boy Drinking from his Hands*, but suggested it lacked the grandeur necessary for historical painting. He advised Repin to study the works of Poussin in the Hermitage to find a historical landscape that would seem less incongruous with the subject matter. Already a proclivity towards painting from life, instilled by Persanov's dictums and bolstered by contacts with the *Artel*, meant that Repin found this an entirely unacceptable method of working and,

not surprisingly, was unimpressed by the "artificial, darkened, unnatural" works of Poussin.⁴⁴ He nevertheless made good progress and between the Academy and the *Artel* rapidly gained a balanced diet of technical and temperamental training. His academic life drawings of this period show a degree of skill beyond his years.⁴⁵

Repin's paintings at the Academy, between his entrance in 1864, and his departure for Paris in 1873, are virtually all of a classical or religious nature, and will be discussed at a later stage. They include *The Rape of the Sabines*, *The Slaughter of the Egyptian Firstborn*, and *Calvary* (all of 1869), and in the same year *Job and His Friends* (Ill. 105), which earned Stasov's praise and was awarded a Small Gold Medal. Later, in 1871, another prescribed religious canvas, *Christ Raising Jairus' Daughter from the Dead* (Ill. 106) won for Repin the Grand Gold Medal and a three year scholarship to travel abroad. Stasov was impressed by its originality, describing it simply as "wonderful" and advising visitors to the first Peredvizhnik exhibition in 1871, to take a detour into the halls housing the Academy's exhibit where the canvas was hanging.⁴⁶ By dint of the official training he was receiving at the Academy it is not surprising to find that many of the paintings done between these years are lacking in either verve or originality, though *Job and His Friends* and *Christ Raising Jairus' Daughter from the Dead* are notable exceptions. But it would be wrong to assume that Repin had an enmity towards such themes. He was greatly impressed by Kramskoy's progress on his painting *Christ in the Wilderness* (1872, Ill. 107), and though he criticised the artist's attempt to divest Christ of His spiritual majesty, he acknowledged the sincere attempt to portray His dilemma and suffering on a human level.⁴⁷ In this respect Kramskoy was working away from Academic convention and towards a realist, or at least human conception of Christ.

During this period Repin also became acquainted with the work of Aleksandr Ivanov whose enormous painting *The Appearance of Christ to the People* (1837-1857) he saw in Moscow in 1867, describing it as "The greatest work in the whole world, by a genius, born in Russia".⁴⁸ He was careful not to group Ivanov amongst the likes of Bruni and his classical colleagues.

Repin was particularly active during 1867-69, and in addition to those religious works executed as part of his academic course produced many portraits as well as working on a number of scenes from street life, unconnected with the routine subjects set for the students. Surprisingly however, one of the earliest of these, *Reading for an Examination* (1864, Ill.6) was the first painting he displayed at the Academy.

Of particular charm is a small portrait thought to be of *Anyuta Petrova*⁴⁹ (1864, Ill.4) the daughter of Repin's first landlord. It shows a discernible improvement on his portraits done in Chuguyev, both in technique and in the bold, closely cropped composition. The child's down-cast eyes and concentrated expression are captured with great subtlety and the warm red tones of the hair contrast with the softly illuminated brow. Meticulous detailing can be seen in the inclusion at the temples of tiny blue veins. Kramskoy, who thought Repin's works produced outside the Academy of superior quality, less constrained and more natural, praised an unidentified picture which could possibly be the same work.⁵⁰

Repin's future in-laws, the Shevtsovs, were the subject of numerous portrait drawings which show the same prosaic intimacy and ease of composition which characterise his non-academic works. One of a series of pencil portraits of 1867, *Family scene at the Shevtsovs*,⁵¹ depicts the household seated informally about the piano, and a full oil portrait of the young Vera Shevtsova (Ill.5), later Repin's wife, was completed in 1869. The latter could be described as Repin's first mature portrait, possessing both surety of handling and command of drawing. The pose is relaxed and unidealised, and the largely monochromatic palette alleviated by bold splashes of red on the girl's dress. The lower half of the dress is represented by no more than an area of pure red paint roughly striped with broad green strokes, hurriedly applied in a manner suggestive of total artistic confidence.⁵²

Members of the same family appear in *Reading for an Examination* (1864, Ill.6) in which Vera's brothers, Aleksandr and Alexei, are depicted in the room they shared with the young Repin. There are overtones here of the 1850s-1860s genre paintings: the gentle mockery

at human foibles, in this case the lethargic student who lies, like a minor official from one of Fedotov's paintings, asleep with his book on his chest, and the inattentive student who blows a kiss to the girl at the opposite window. Repin later recalled the work as being in "the formal manner of the Chuguyev school"⁵³ The painting certainly bears traces of his youthful training, being small and detailed, painted with fine, almost pernickety attention to detail. The figure drawings, the rendition of cold, clear, winter light flooding the apartment, and the gentle blending of ochre, lilac and terra cotta hues of the polished floor, wallpaper and carpeting, nevertheless mark this as a highly accomplished early work.

The list of portraits which Repin fitted into his hectic academic schedule gives one pause for thought that he managed to achieve so much whilst undergoing his formal training.⁵⁴ A portrait of his brother Vasily, who attended the Conservatory, painted in 1867,⁵⁵ is perhaps, after that of Vera Shevtsova, Repin's most accomplished work, whilst that of the architect and fellow student Philip Khloboshchin of 1868 is one of his most unconventionally pleasing works, showing a finely modelled, strong chiaroscuro face, the sitter semi-reclining with a confident gaze directed towards the viewer. The rough handling of the paint on the crimson velvet chair and the brisk but confident modelling of the features are combined with a deceptively simple pose and vacant, monochrome background, to produce a startlingly intimate effect.⁵⁶

Repin still found time to complete a series of street scenes of everyday life in St. Petersburg which are one more example of his growing independence and desire to branch out from the restrictions of academic precepts. *Try your Strength*⁵⁷ (*Dynamometer Booths*, 1868) is a rumbustious holiday scene of locals trying out a test-your-strength machine at one of the numerous fairs, whilst *Young Boy in Front of a Watchmaker's Shop*⁵⁸ (Russian Museum, 1872) is a beautifully executed pencil and watercolour sketch of a child in apron and cap, carrying a pannier on his head, peering into the shop, his face delicately modelled in the warm light which flows from the window, contrasting sharply with the cold, dark exterior. *Family Conversation*⁵⁹ (1860s), a pen and ink drawing, is a curious oddity of outlandish caricature, the

title applied tongue in cheek to a heated family quarrel.

Also worthy of mention in passing is a small, dark, jewel-like watercolour *The Merchant Kalashnikov*⁵⁰ (Private Collection, 1868) from Lermontov's poem of that name. It depicts the merchant and his wife in wealthy seventeenth century dress, in a claustrophobic space enclosed by the darkened surroundings of the winter-bound streets. Atmospheric and melodramatic by nature the picture is quite uncharacteristic of the work which Repin was producing at this time.

One of the most interesting of the works done outside of the Academy, are the sketches of *The Execution of D. V. Karakozov*. Karakozov, a revolutionary who sought to stamp his mark on history by precipitating a revolution, made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of Alexander II in 1866. On the morning of his execution Repin and his friend Nikolai Murashko were present and Repin shortly afterwards did two drawings of the scene from memory: one depicting the revolutionary being driven to the place of execution, the other a head and shoulders portrait (1866, Ill. 7).⁵¹

The portrait drawing of Karakozov has a dramatic tinge, depicting the revolutionary wide-eyed, with a look of worried apprehension which is awkwardly conceived. It is important for being an early example of Repin's images of revolutionaries but also shows that by 1866, following his association with Kramskoy and the *Artel*, the young artist was taking stock not only of contemporary events, but was broadening his technical resources by working from memory. The *Artel* 'Thursdays' included a similar exercise, working on fancied themes without the use of a model.⁵² As any artist or student will affirm, painting or drawing from memory is one of the most difficult, exacerbating and rewarding tasks.

Repin's artistic independence was bolstered by periods working away from the influence both of the Academy and the *Artel*. Between May and August of 1867 he spent a care-free summer sketching in and around Chuguyev and the nearby village of Tishka. Portraits, as usual, account for most of his output, but he was also drawn towards depictions of peasant life, a genre which was increasingly occupying his thoughts.⁵³ Despite an awareness of the need for a proper programme of training, and his much valued independent contacts with

artists like Kramskoy, this period of uninhibited and unsupervised artistic work, following his own inclinations, was something he revelled in and which he attempted to keep up even when back in the capital. In 1868, whilst still involved with the academic rigors of *Diogenes*, Repin records summer trips with fellow students to the village of Lakhta, on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, spent sketching, boating and sunbathing.⁶⁴

The freedom and lack of restraint which marked these 'out of town' sketching trips assumed greater significance during 1870 when, with his brother Vasiley and the artists Fyodor Vasilyev and Yevgeny Makarov, he travelled down the Volga in order to observe more closely the lives of the barge haulers.⁶⁵ The idea for a painting of the barge haulers dated from 1868 when, in the company of the artist Konstantin Savitsky, Repin observed some haulers on the Neva and was deeply perturbed by their wretched appearance and de-humanising work. The trip was partly financed by the Conference Secretary P.F. Iseev, who specially purchased one of Repin's drawings for the purpose.⁶⁶

The finished painting, *Barge Haulers on the Volga* (1870-1873, Ill.31), was Repin's first international success and possibly more art historical ink has been spilt over this one canvas than any of his works. A fuller discussion of the painting is contained in chapter 4, but facets of its production and reception have an important bearing on Repin's burgeoning career and need to be noted at this point.

On a personal level the open and relaxed manner of the trip (the artists often shared one another's sketch books) seems to have loosened up Repin's technical ability, allowing him to give reign to his more natural talent. The topographical sketches are particularly graceful and of an impromptu nature, suggesting a discernible rise in artistic accomplishment. Repin confirmed that the experience was a liberating and eye-opening learning process which, unbeknown to him at the time, he was much in need of. At the Academy he had learned to see the world in bas-relief, whereas on the Volga it had appeared to him in relief and perspective.⁶⁷

The importance of the painting went beyond the controversy it aroused or the artistic recognition which now came Repin's way. To his undoubted ability was added the enormous fillip of Stasov's fulsome

critical approval. Discerning in Repin the great hope for the nationalist-realist vein of art which he had been tirelessly promoting, Stasov clasped the young artist to his ideological bosom and a painter could seldom have hoped for better support.⁶⁸ Stasov was to be one of the most powerful influences upon Repin's artistic outlook and though their relationship was at times strained, especially so as Repin matured and increasingly expressed opinions at variance with those of his mentor, his intellectual guidance and support was a crucial factor in launching Repin's early career and one which, despite many differences, Repin graciously acknowledged.⁶⁹

Another important figure entered Repin's life at this time, though in a more practical vein. The collector Pavel Tretyakov (1832-1898) was one, but by far the most prominent, of only a handful of wealthy art patrons who, from the 1850s onwards, provided almost the sole means of alternative employment for artists, outside of the usual academic commissions.⁷⁰ Tretyakov's huge collection of Russian canvases, amassed in part as a private devotion, in part as a civic duty, was eventually donated to the city of Moscow in 1892, and over the forty intervening years his tastes naturally bore strongly on the development of Russian art. An Orthodox believer, and a more conservative, reserved character than the combative and sometimes belligerent Stasov, Tretyakov's influence upon Repin, reflected through his commissions, is less conspicuous but no less important than that of the vociferous Stasov.⁷¹

The Formation of the Peredvizhniki: Repin's reaction

Between 1870-73 when Repin was working on the *Burlaki* another major event, with implications for Russian art more far-reaching than the establishment of the *Artel*, was taking place. The formation in 1871 of the Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок,⁷² or Peredvizhniki as they became known, realised Kramskoy's dream of an independent artistic organisation which, unlike the *Artel*, was professionally administered and attracted genuine mass popularity. The impetus came from Moscow, largely from the painters Grigory Myasoyedov and Nikolai Ge, to whom were added Perov, Alexei Savrasov, Ilarion Pryanishnikov and Lev Kamenov. Ge played a key role in establishing

the Society's position. A well-educated member of the gentry and of the intellectual community, who had made contact with Alexander Herzen during his time in Italy, he was perfectly suited to bridge the intellectual gap between the artistic and literary communities.

The Peredvizhniki also attracted support from Stasov who, commencing with an ecstatic reception of their first exhibition,⁷³ continued to champion the cause through its hey-day and eventual decline. With able administrators, a powerful literary voice, and the blessing of Tretyakov's substantial patronage, the new Society launched itself as a viable alternative to the Academy.

In November 1869 the Moscow artists signed draft statutes for the Society, based on the need for their art to be freed from bureaucratic controls and to be circulated amongst a wider public.⁷⁴ These, surprisingly, received a luke-warm reception with the *Artel* and only four members joined. Others wished not to further antagonise the Academy, a point of view which Myasoyedov poured scorn on.⁷⁵ Kramskoy, however, was enthusiastic, urging his colleagues that union with the Muscovite artists could only strengthen their position.⁷⁶ The statutes received official approval from the Ministry of Internal Affairs in November 1870 and the inaugural exhibition opened on 28 November 1871 in, of all places, the halls of the Academy. This initial benevolence appears to have been an aberration since, for the fifteen years from 1873 onwards, the Academy adopted a hostile attitude: students were prohibited from exhibiting with the Society upon pain of debarment from the Grand Gold Medal competition; rights to exhibition space were restricted and attempts made to stem the flow of patronage. An unsuccessful attempt at pressurising Ge and Kramskoy to merge with the Academy was bravely faced down in 1874.⁷⁷

The aims set out in the Peredvizhniki's statutes included circulating exhibits to the provinces to "broaden the circle of art-lovers" and widening the financial market for artists. Otherwise the document concerned itself with administrative formalities.⁷⁸ Though in temperament and ideological outlook the artists were of the liberal, reform-minded generation of the 1860s, the principal aim of the Society was a simple one: artistic autonomy.⁷⁹

Repin's reaction to the Peredvizhniki was mixed. His determination

to finish his academic studies was still uppermost, not least because the attainment of the social rank which preferment of titles brought, freed him from the odious social obligations attached to his lowly social standing.⁸⁰ The importance of this issue is underlined by the fate of Fyodor Vasilyev, a fellow traveller on the Volga expedition, who was arrested *en route* to the Crimea where he hoped to ameliorate the tuberculosis which was eventually to kill him. It was feared that Vasilyev might be attempting to dodge the forthcoming military draft (then 16 years) to which the lower estates were liable. Furious attempts were made by Kramskoy and his fellow artists to obtain the artistic preferment which would release him from the civic obligations of his class, but to no avail. He was still awaiting developments from the neolithic bureaucracy at the Academy two years later when he died. Kramskoy made it plain that he considered the inequalities resulting from Vasilyev's lowly standing were at the root of his death.⁸¹ In these circumstances it is not hard to see why Repin, a senior student six years into his academic programme, would be reticent to throw in his lot with a newly forming independent body; indeed up to the opening day many of the mature artists had severe doubts to which some eventually gave way. Nikolai Ge recalled:

"It was a frightening thing for many. Each of us must have sensed that what was happening was not at all simple; each must have wondered, in his conscience, 'can I carry this through?' On the day of the opening, several members withdrew. The position of those remaining was risky..."⁸²

Repin was however eager for the success of the new Society and Myasoyedov's letter of 23 November 1869, urging members of the *Artel* to merge with the Muscovite painters, headed 'Letter from a group of Muscovite artists to the St. Petersburg artists' *Artel*', was also signed by Repin and Vasilyev, then students at the Academy.⁸³

The Slavonic Composers (1872)

Repin completed one other major canvas during the period that he worked on the *Burlaki*, a large panel for the Moscow hotel Slavyansky Bazar, *Slavonic Composers* (1872, Ill. 8) depicting a group of Russian, Polish and Czech composers.⁸⁴

He was by now already enjoying the company of many musical figures,

including the 'Mighty Five', Balakirev, Borodin, Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov and Musorgsky, to whom he was introduced at musical evenings in Stasov's apartment from late 1871 onwards.

Repin retained a life-long love of music and remained on close terms with many composers, singers and musicians, none more so than Musorgsky.⁸⁵ In 1872, the year he completed the *Slavonic Composers*, he illustrated the frontispiece to the score of Musorgsky's *Детская* (Ill. 9) a charming piece of graphic work utilising children's toys and musical notes to form the text.⁸⁶ He also left a memoir of Alexander Serov,⁸⁷ to whom he was introduced by Antokolsky. Repin remembers the composer working on his opera *The Devil* (*Вражья сила*) and holding forth on the younger generation's inattentiveness towards music. He was present at the composer's death and regretted not sketching the scene.⁸⁸

Initially Repin was enthusiastic about the *Slavonic Composers*.⁸⁹ Stasov provided invaluable assistance furnishing him with information, prints and photographs of the mixture of living and dead composers and, in the cases of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Napravnik, arranging sittings.⁹⁰ The list of composers was drawn up by Anton Rubinstein but suffered many changes during wrangles over who should be included.

The painting seemed doomed to failure from the start: a conglomeration of dead and living figures, some drawn from life, others from photos or prints, and a patron, A. Porokhovshchikov, the hotel's owner, who became increasingly meddlesome with his demands as to how the finished work should appear. The fee paid to Repin, 1500 roubles, was a huge sum, but nevertheless one he was willing to forego in order to save his integrity. In February of 1872 Repin wrote a terse letter placing the blame for his failure to work firmly at the feet of the patron:

"After your last telegram I simply cannot work. Do you think an artist can work under the stick? It is so tactless on your part, not to say indelicate... You spoiled my creative mood and consequently the work went poorly and I began to spoil the picture... I do not intend to ruin my reputation for your 1500 roubles. I would rather destroy the painting and return your money."⁹¹

Nevertheless work continued towards a painful conclusion, the hotel owner remaining adamant over which composers he wanted in the canvas, ruling out the unorthodox Musorgsky, Borodin, Cui and Rimsky-Korsakov who, to the credit of the academically-minded Rubinstein, had been included on the original list.

When work ended Repin was predictably gloomy. Stasov dutifully raised a rare voice of praise,³² but otherwise the picture was not warmly received. Turgenev, who was being bombarded by Stasov's praises of Repin was positively scathing, describing it firstly as a "calamity",³³ and later on as "a cold vinaigrette of the living and the dead...forced nonsense",³⁴ a view which he suggested the artist shared. Repin painfully recalled the meeting with Turgenev and the writer's comment: "Well, what is this, Repin? What a stupid idea to combine the living with those long dead!"³⁵

The failure of the *Slavonic Composers* was a blow to Repin and certainly dented his confidence, especially since the *Burlaki* was simultaneously receiving great praise. Four years later, whilst in Paris, he declined a commission put his way by Conference Secretary Iseev, stating that after the failure of the *Slavonic Composers* he was "afraid" to commit himself to such an undertaking again.³⁶ In succeeding decades, up to the time of his death, Repin was to prove curiously inconsistent when painting large, densely populated canvases, vacillating between a sure command of his subject and materials to sometimes clumsy, unharmonious groupings of apparently unrelated individuals, literally 'lumped' together. His *Finnish Celebrities* (Ateneum, Helsinki, 1922), for instance, which is considered in chapter 8, stands at the far end of Repin's career and, viewed alongside the *Slavonic Composers*, might suggest he learned nothing during the intervening fifty years, were it not for the wealth of successful paintings we have from the interim.

The *Slavonic Composers* now hangs at the top of a dimly lit staircase in the Большой зал of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow in no better a situation that it did, apparently, in the concert hall of the Slavyansky Bazar. Only after some time, when one's eyes become accustomed to the light, can one can really form a judgment on the painting. Certainly in the severely restricted and muddy colour

scheme, and the stiltedness of the figures, the work seems a world away from the modern day *Burlaki*, bathed in sunlight and open air. Alexander Serov stands out to the right in a most uncomfortable manner, as if pasted there at Bruni's suggestion. The portrait of Anton Rubinstein, seated at the piano in an unflatteringly 'slumped' pose, is certainly the best of an indifferent batch and one is not surprised to learn that, sketches aside, this was the only sitter painted from life.⁹⁷ Departure from his own practise of observation from life was perhaps the artist's undoing.

The picture does, however, show that in adversity Repin continued to make technical progress. The sheen on the simple, chequered floor, is artfully achieved by leaving large areas of the canvas unpainted and unprimed. Accessories such as the furniture are painted in the roughest, most sketchy manner, yet hold together well when viewed from a decent distance. Repin appears confident in his handling of the paint, calculating the visual effect which would result when the painting was hung, wasting no time on non-essentials. An early affection for baroque decoration can be seen on the epaulettes and colourful uniform decoration of the seated Dargomyzhsky. Though muddy of colour, the tonal qualities are well harmonised: seen in black and white reproduction, where the incongruity of the individual sitters is less apparent, the picture, with its strong light source flowing from the top left, looks finely executed and a most pleasing work. *In situ* the effect is sadly otherwise.

The success of the *Burlaki* however was enough to temporarily obliterate the failure of the *Slavonic Composers*, which could be conveniently blamed on a meddlesome patron. In February of 1872 he had married Vera Shevtsova and in May of 1873 he embarked with his wife and six month old daughter Vera, on his first trip abroad. The three-year stipend for foreign study, conferred by the Gold Medal for *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead*, had been postponed to finish the *Burlaki*. Now Repin set off for Paris, by way of Vienna (where the *Burlaki* was exhibited successfully at the World Exhibition), Venice, Florence and Rome, arriving in the French capital in October 1873.

CHAPTER 2

Foreign travels and reactions to Western art.

As calls for a distinctly national school of art intensified, the attitudes and reactions of Russian artists towards European painting took on an aspect not merely of personal taste, but also of ideological outlook. Chernyshevsky had declared that the artist who avoided social issues supported the status quo¹, a view typical of the current intellectual debate in which neutrality was the cardinal sin. The artistic status quo was clearly the Academy, and accordingly the responses of young, impressionable students, confronted by the artistic wonders and treasure-houses of the West became the touchstone for sifting the dissenters from the traditionalists, the innovators from the conservatives, and, naturally, the Slavophiles from the Westernisers.

The terms Slavophile and Westerniser were, as ever, applied broadly, often crudely. Artists who exhibited a preference for native subjects would be labelled Slavophiles in that their concern was primarily inward looking,² whilst those conversant with new trends in European art were dubbed Westernisers simply because their horizons extended beyond national boundaries. Polarisation of debate saw little room and negligible inclination to accommodate artists who found much to admire on both sides.

The power and prestige of the Academy as an international institution remained undiminished throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and Rome retained its pre-eminence as the central training ground for artists. Russian painters of the generation of Karl Bryullov (1799-1852), Fyodor Bruni (1799-1875) and Aleksandr Ivanov (1806-1858) all studied in Italy, often residing there for very long periods. The day-to-day contact with the antique, which formed the staple diet of academic painting, suited their proclivities. Munich and Paris were also important centres of artistic education but by the second half of the century Paris was challenging strongly for the role of the artistic capital and increasing numbers of painters sought an education there. Whilst foreign travel had proved no problem to Russia's classically-minded artists, the generation which had

matured under the age of reform were consistently harangued to review their artistic position in an ideological and utilitarian light. Under such pressures Russian painters abroad for the first time, even if well disposed towards Western painting, frequently felt that the problems and issues closer to home were more pressing and therefore more deserving of attention. In effect, and to the detriment of wider recognition abroad, the focus of most artists from the late 1850s, right up to the close of the century, was set strongly on a national rather than international path. Vasily Perov, for instance, served only two years of a six-year scholarship abroad during 1862-1864, at which time he showed no awareness of the establishment of the *Salon des Refusés*, an event which reportedly reached "the proportions of a public scandal".³ In petitioning for an early return to Russia Perov summed up his dilemma:

"To my mind, rather than devote several years of my life to the study of a foreign country, it would be far more worth while to make use of the immeasurably rich subjects from urban and rural life in our country. I have in mind some subjects drawn from Russian life and hope to have more success with these than with subjects from a people I hardly know."⁴

Ivan Shishkin, the landscape artist, postponed for three years his scholarship for foreign travel awarded in 1860, devoting himself instead to native scenes, and once abroad, in an unnatural *milieu*, supposedly "begged" to be reunited with the Motherland.⁵ Repin too postponed his foreign scholarship, awarded in 1871 for *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead*. By retaining the classification of a genre painter he was able to spend three out of the six years conferred by the Grand Gold Medal at home, instead of abroad. This gave him time to complete work on the *Burlaki* and possibly too much ideological sentiment should not be read into the delay. The prospect of foreign travel and a closer acquaintance with the art of the West was nevertheless not so great an attraction as to draw him away from the completion of an important (and very Russian) painting.

It would be misleading to infer from the experiences of Perov and Shishkin that a generation of painters rejected, or felt innately hostile towards Western art *per se*. The sculptor Mark Antokolsky

recalled how he and his fellow students admired reproductions of fashionable French artists such as Gérôme, Meissonnier, and Delaroche,⁶ and Kramskoy, who was in Paris during 1869, though just as ignorant of current events as was Perov,⁷ exhibited no hard prejudices, eagerly accepting his first opportunity for foreign travel. Russian artists were provided with excellent examples of Western painting prior to travelling abroad. The Hermitage, with its magnificent collections of European art, chiefly Dutch, Flemish and Renaissance, was supplemented by the mainly French collection of Prince Kushelev-Bezborodko, donated to the Academy in 1866 to form the core of its study collection, which included works by Delacroix, Millet, Corot, Rousseau and Courbet.⁸

The negative reaction by artists of this period towards developing trends in Western art, and their continuation of a realist style combined with national, often socially-conscious subject matter, led to an artistic *cul-de-sac*, a route still being much travelled in the Soviet Union today. On Perov's flight from Paris and his lack of awareness of French painting, it has been noted: "A whole page of history is to be found in this fact".⁹ This can be considered a fortuitous or tragic turn of events for Russian painting, depending upon one's outlook, but certainly the 1860s and beyond marked a period of heightened national awareness in the arts which continued for a longer period, and with greater fervour, than in other European countries.

Repin's first letters from abroad reflect this self-conscious attitude towards Western art. From Vienna he moved to Italy, visiting Vienna and Florence, before settling for periods in Rome and Naples. Here his awareness of addressing a home audience results in a chameleon-like attitude, tailoring his comments to the recipient, and though there is nothing more invidious in his actions than a general desire to please, the duality of his views is an inconsistency easily exploited, whether by latter-day writers eager to fit him into an ideological mould, or by contemporaries such as Stasov, whose selective quoting from Repin's views on Italian art was later to cause the first of several rifts between artist and writer.

Reporting to Iseev, the Academy's Conference Secretary, Repin wrote

rapturously of Venice, the Piazza of San Marco, the Doge's Palace and of the works of Veronese and Titian. He admired Florence, especially the Pitti and Uffizi Galleries as well as the architecture, in particular the Cathedral, but he was impatient to see Rome. In the event he was not impressed: "I came, I saw, I was bored".¹⁰ He called it a moribund city, singling out only Michelangelo for qualified praise. To Stasov he was even more damning and, as befitted their relationship, was at pains to emphasise his commitment to Russia, describing Rome as "an outmoded, dead city".¹¹ He repeated his respect for the power of Michelangelo's *Moses* but was positively dismissive of nearly everything else, Raphael and his followers in particular. He concluded:

"I now respect Russia more than ever!...I shall not be here for long, God willing two years, or scarcely that. It is necessary to work on native soil. I feel that I am experiencing a reaction against the sympathies of my ancestors: as they despised Russia and loved Italy, so I am now opposed to Italy with its sickening, conventional beauty".¹²

In Rome he was reunited with his student colleagues Antokolsky, Semiradsky, Kovalevsky, Polenov, and Adrian Prakhov, who was then studying art history.¹³ An interest for contemporary artists saw Repin seek out Fortuny, Villegas, and Morelli.¹⁴ He was particularly taken with the dazzlingly coloured works of Fortuny who was to remain for him a favourite amongst Western artists and he communicated his ardent appreciation to Stasov, Iseev and Kramskoy.¹⁵ But nothing of importance was forthcoming from Repin's brush or pen as he tried to digest the welter of images passing swiftly before him through a succession of Italian cities, and his first impressions from abroad show a measure of appreciation, deprecation and general confusion.

Paris 1873-1876

Repin arrived in Paris on 10 October 1873 and initially was not sure what to make of the city. He wrote to Stasov that he was impressed¹⁶ and to Kramskoy that he was simply perplexed, even scared.¹⁷ To both he expressed a desire to begin work. Paris was full

of unemployed artists and he was, as usual, in dire need of funds. The presence of his wife and one-year old daughter meant that lodgings and a studio were a prime concern.¹⁸ To ease this hardship Stasov arranged for his brother Dmitry to buy a variant of the *Burlaki, Barge-haulers Crossing a Ford* (Ill. 32, 1872).

Stasov also tried to arrange a portrait commission of the Russian millionaire financier Baron Gintsberg, then living in Paris. Repin received a letter of introduction from Dmitry Stasov but postponed the visit saying: "I will go when at the depths of poverty".¹⁹ The tone implies that he regarded the commission as a form of subsistence which he was unwilling to accept from a wealthy patron. Possibly he was still troubled by the humiliating memory of the meeting with his first patron, Pryanishnikov. When later he changed his mind and presented himself with Stasov's card at the Gintsberg palace he was turned down flat, much to the embarrassment of both Stasov brothers.

Iseev, the Academic Conference Secretary, was also at pains to help Repin after the artist's first letter of report described a routine of incessant work and a desire to begin a large-scale composition:

"...I am working like never before. Never have I had so many pictures crowded into my head: I am drawing without rest, I do not know what to choose...I want to do something serious, something big..."²⁰

Repin was unsure about committing time and effort to one large canvas which, eventually, he could not be guaranteed of selling, but Iseev generously agreed to purchase the work without even knowing what the artist had in mind, asking only for some general information on the project so that the Academy could not be accused of buying blindly.²¹ In reply Repin outlined his idea for *Sadko in the Underwater Kingdom* (Ill. 18) which was eventually completed three years later.²²

Initially Repin adopted a curmudgeonly attitude towards Paris and French art, reflecting a dissatisfaction with his environment. He wrote to Kramskoy that it was superficial, valuing nothing except what was "of the moment" and "effect". Impoverished artists dashed-off facile, muddy works which made him sick at heart. He longed to return

home but feared he would be made a laughing stock.²³ Kramskoy stilled Repin's discontent by exhorting him to concern himself with France's "great past".²⁴ Repin had been dogged by continual ill-health during his trips to Vienna and Italy²⁵ and this, coupled with the immediate practical problems of finding a studio and lodgings, possibly account for his initially negative reaction to Paris, which soon improved.

He later wrote to Kramskoy on various subjects: the Venus de Milo (which he saw on a dull day and did not appreciate); Veronese and Titian, whose works looked dull and gloomy in the Louvre, far from how he had seen them in Naples. French paintings looked dark and crude after Italy, but he was bursting with praise for the French people:

"The French are an incomparable race, almost ideal. They have an unforced, harmonious language, delicate civility, swiftness, ease, immediate comprehension, an evangelical tolerance of their neighbour's shortcomings and irreproachable integrity. Yes, they are rightly republicans."²⁶

Repin's open-mindedness and toleration towards new phenomena at this point does him credit and is far removed from the sometimes bitter expressions of insecurity which underlay the Russian stereotype of the French as sybarites and epicureans. On his first visit to Paris in 1857 Tolstoy castigated the French as sensation-seeking and frivolous,²⁷ a view which time only strengthened. *The Kreutzer Sonata*, written in 1889, contains the observation that man's highest ideal is:

"...not, needless to say, the ideal of pigs and rabbits, which is to reproduce themselves as abundantly as possible, nor that of monkeys and Parisians, which is to enjoy sexual pleasure with the greatest degree of refinement possible...."²⁸

Repin merely commented: "We consider the French a depraved people, but so far I have seen no glimpse or mention of this depravity."²⁹

His mood had clearly been cheered by the recent arrival from Rome of Polenov who, just as he had provided the *entrée* to Mamontov's circle in Rome, introduced Repin to the expatriate group of young Russian artists around Alexei Bogolyubov (1824-1896), whom Grabar describes as their "unofficial guardian".³⁰ A generation older than Repin and his contemporaries, Bogolyubov was a man with connections,

having been a drawing tutor to the future Alexander III, and was in a position to recommend artists to the distinguished clientèle who visited his studio. He was a popular figure with the young artists and Repin wrote warmly of his character and artistic judgment.³¹ He was not taken, however, with some of the artists in Bogolyubov's company, which included Alexei Kharlamov, Yuri Leman, Ivan Pozhalostin, Nikolai Dobrovolsky, Aleksandr Beggrov and Ivan Pokhitonov, along with his old friends Nikolai Dmitriyev-Orenburgsky, Konstantin Savitsky and Viktor Vasnetsov.

In particular Repin was unimpressed with Kharlamov, Leman and Pozhalostin who, at this early stage in their careers, were talking of remaining in Paris for good. If Repin was tolerant towards the French people at this time he could not efface his distaste for fashionable French art:

"Kharlamov already paints practically like a born Frenchman, even drawing badly (intentionally). Leman is in concord with the French and pursues a great mistake in art, to paint from black 'completely without colouring'. With the easy style of Bonnat they (like all Parisians) now paint Italians, purposely ordered from Naples (bringing in around 10 francs a day)...costume pieces..."³²

It is interesting to note the derogatory coupling of Kharlamov and Leman with Léon Bonnat. Bonnat, like Manet, made strong use of black and was also influenced by the Spanish masters Velazquez, Murillo and Ribera (he was educated in Spain). His powerful, concrete portraits are not dissimilar in style to Repin's mature works, but clearly at this juncture the artist was unsympathetic to both Bonnat and his style. Early in the following year Repin took a vicarious delight in reporting that Bonnat had bestowed his blessing upon Kharlamov's work, like a professor with his successful pupil, his "sonny boy".³³

It is important to note this early and instinctive dislike of Kharlamov's pursuit of fashionable success, both because it highlights a main concern of Repin's; the desire to paint seriously and to be considered as a sincere, 'thinking' painter, and also because Kharlamov was soon to be promoted by Turgenev and in turn Zola, to the detriment of Repin. Repin and Kharlamov, between their respective promoters, Stasov and Turgenev, became emblems of opposing artistic

philosophies and it is necessary to note that Repin's negative attitude towards Kharlamov predates that period.

Apart from the artists grouped around Bogolyubov, Repin seems to have kept his field of acquaintances very much within Russian circles. The only exceptions, to whom he makes reference, are the American painters Bridgeman and Pearce, the Pole Szyndler, and a German painter Zeitner.³⁴

Once settled, Repin embarked on the "serious" work he had outlined to Iseev, *Sadko*, a theme taken from the Russian bylina. But as always he worked on several projects at a time, devoting more or less attention to each as his mood changed. The major works to come out of his Parisian period, though not necessarily the best, are a contemporary and uncharacteristic boulevard scene, *A Parisian Café* (1875, Ill.10), the *Portrait of Turgenev* (1874, Ill.12), and *Sadko*. Although the pictures are dated to the time that Repin completed them, all three, and more besides, were conceived soon after his arrival in the French capital. Each in some measure influenced the outcome of the others, progress on no one canvas being continuous or harmonious.

A Parisian Café (1875)

The initial enthusiasm Repin felt for *Sadko* soon waned as he warmed to Parisian society. He took instead to painting from life³⁵ and began to interest himself in French art, though with reservations. He confided to Stasov that *Sadko* was turning out to be merely a decorative piece, and would not fulfill his ambitions.³⁶ In March 1874 he wrote again to Stasov to say that he had put *Sadko* aside to begin working from life on a new, contemporary café scene.³⁷ Conceived as a *Salon* piece, *A Parisian Café* became a major undertaking for Repin and between commencement and completion in 1875 it provoked ideological consternation in both Stasov and Kramskoy.³⁸

In considering *A Parisian Café* one becomes aware of how unsettled and contradictory was Repin's emotional state, making it difficult to follow a consistent line of thinking. To Stasov he confessed to being "terribly interested" in Paris, "beyond description", but a digression on the charm of French models heralds a slide into despondency: the

models are expensive and funds are short, his works remain unfinished or unsold, and he blames the Academy for sending the likes of himself abroad unprepared for the hardships, but adding: "Most stupid of all was I for coming!". And he ends: "My painting of Parisian life will not be bought by Russians, nor the French. Naturally it will fetch little".³⁹ A month later he wrote:

"I want to come back to Russia badly, in order to work in my own style and to study my native land - to develop further our tastes, notions and images, which, as you know, demands no end of work. I am fascinated by Little Russia and its history: much of what I see there cries out to be painted."⁴⁰

But Repin kept faith with the painting, experimenting with the composition, defending his right to work on an 'alien' theme in the face of stern opposition from those about him. His fears for the painting's commercial appeal proved sadly correct. He told Tretyakov he regretted not being able to show him the canvas, depicting the "main types of Paris in their most typical places", and made strong overtures for a purchase.⁴¹ The hint, however, went unheeded and the picture was still in Repin's studio when the Swede, Martin Mansson, purchased it in 1918.

Work slowed whilst he tackled Turgenev's portrait and intermittently *Sadko*, and was further interrupted by a painting trip to Normandy with Bogolyubov, Polenov and Savitsky, but by the following February, 1876, he wrote to Stasov that he was almost finished,⁴² and in April-May it was exhibited at the official *Salon* under the title *Un café du boulevard*.

Sadly it was not a success, a fact Repin put down to its being 'skyed', a regrettable necessity when exhibiting so many paintings. After three weeks he exercised the right to have the painting re-hung, normal procedure for which was to move high pictures lower and low pictures higher. At the time the American Vice-Consul in Paris had shown interest in purchasing the work but Repin was deeply humiliated to find that his request resulted in the painting being re-positioned a foot higher. Not surprisingly he told Kramskoy he would rather not talk about his picture but noted, with obvious chagrin, that Kharlamov, with the help of the Viardots and Turgenev, had received

great attention, a medal and a mention in *Figaro*.⁴³

It was an ignominious end to an ambitious venture, during which he risked a serious rift with Iseev and the Academy. Iseev in fact showed remarkable tolerance throughout Repin's period of foreign study. In 1874 Repin tested his patience by exhibiting four works at the 3rd Peredvizhnik exhibition,⁴⁴ despite being bound by his pensioner status to send all of his paintings to the Academy and to refrain from exhibiting elsewhere. Repin justified his action on the grounds that he had received no official notification from the Academy of this obligation (though he could hardly have been ignorant of it) and that he would fulfill their requirements by forwarding an academic study to exhibit as they saw fit. He also remonstrated, rhetorically, that he saw no difference between exhibiting thus and selling his works through a dealer, a practice allowed under the Academy's statutes as a form of subsistence. He reasoned that if the Academy provided so scantily for its pensioners it was to be expected that they would seek alternative finances, and was prepared to stand his ground: "...the Devil take them, with their stipend...I'm not a child".⁴⁵

Kramskoy was delighted at the decision⁴⁶ but Iseev was indignant, if only because Repin had failed to inform him of his intentions. Kramskoy recorded a conversation between Iseev and Myasoyedov during which the Conference Secretary asked whether Repin had given his consent, and was told that Stasov had, with a positive direction from the artist.⁴⁷ Iseev threatened to call him home but eventually decided against it.

When exhibiting *A Parisian Café* Repin requested formal permission, stating a desire to see his work in context and comparison with European artists. But when this was rejected he went ahead regardless, explaining the *fait accompli* to Iseev on the grounds that in the absence of an immediate reply he had been obliged to submit the work to the jury, or risk a refusal by default.⁴⁸ To lessen the affront he made light of the painting as "unfinished" and much later as "full of mistakes", not good enough to send to the Academy, promising instead to redouble his efforts on *Sadko*.⁴⁹

Iseev again responded magnanimously. Shortly after, when Repin requested permission to return home early, Iseev not only gave the

Academy's sanction but additionally sent an offer of a large new commission to decorate the Church of the Saviour in Moscow.⁵⁰ Though he exhibited a growing independence and confidence during his years in Paris, Repin counted in great measure on Iseev's seemingly endless goodwill. But he sensed that even this had its limits since, shortly after the *Parisian Café* débâcle, wishing to enter a life study for the *Salon*, he was prudent enough to get Iseev's permission, saying that if refused it could not harm the Academy, only himself.⁵¹

The content of *A Parisian Café*, as Repin described it to Tretyakov, is "the main types of Paris in their most typical places", though there is evidence to suggest that the models are anything but commonplace. Records in the Louvre, based on communications to Allaen Hjelt, (a friend of both Repin and Mr Mansson), by the Finnish sculptor Ville Valgren (1855-1940) who lived in Paris between 1877-1913, provide the only source of information as to the sitters.⁵² Some identifications in the Louvre records are made by 'Boucher', whose identity is obscure, but is most probably an employee of the Museum.

According to Boucher the figure second from left seated at the table is Brunetière, a writer and critic. The two gentlemen next to him have been identified respectively as M. A. de Pene (possible only) and Arthur Meyer, though nothing more is known of them. The female figure in black is Anna Judic, an actress (both Hjelt and Boucher agree here) and according to Boucher the centrally-seated male figure, in black with a moustache, is the painter Gérôme, though Hjelt identifies him as the writer Guy de Maupassant. Catul Mendez, the Spanish poet, was supposedly the model for the top-hatted man seated at the next table, and according to Boucher the tall man exiting is an Englishman, Mackenzie Graves. Hjelt identifies him as the French writer Théophile Goy. To the extreme right Hjelt identifies the seated figure as Bellot, the model for Manet's *Le bon Bock* (1873) though Boucher says it is the art critic and essay-writer Bergerat.

When Mr Mansson purchased the painting in 1918 the chief female figure was that of the model Marie Louise Thibaudot but in 1936 the painting was x-rayed and the current face revealed. It appears that as late as 1916 Repin changed this figure, the 'cocotte', from a brazen, made-up, self-assured woman to what Grabar describes as a shy and

confused "barishnya", a "Sonechka Marmeladova", down on her luck.⁵³ Restoration in Stockholm in 1936 removed the top face to show the painting as it now stands but Grabar suggests that there is yet a third female head under the present one, which is of a higher quality than the others!⁵⁴

Why Repin changed the figure at such a late stage remains a mystery, though he was much given to this lamentable practise. By 1916 the painting had been sitting in his studio un-sold for forty years and possibly he thought that little he could do would make it less appealing. In the event, as can clearly be seen by comparison with photographs prior to restoration, the original is a very much finer piece of painting. The forlorn, despondent figure of Marie Louise Thibaudot, though possibly suggesting an empathy with the plight of the girl, is a less worldly figure than that of Anna Judic, who more credibly attracts the attention of those about her. Her figure in particular, with its strong use of black and subtle portrayal of pale skin tones and black lace with almost no half-tones, suggests a familiarity with the work of Manet, whom Repin first mentions in a letter of this time.⁵⁵

Though less outrageously, Anna Judic has much of the calm insolence of Manet's scandalous *Olympia* (Musée d'Orsay, 1863), staring out unashamedly at the viewer with an air of self-esteem. *Olympia* was in turn a realist version of the recumbent Venus, common to many Italian masters, and this analogy too seems most appropriate for the semi-reclining female figure, a fitting Venus for modern, urban Paris.

To the right of the picture two men are exiting from the Café. One yawns indifferently to the scene, presumably a native of the city. The other, identified as possibly Mackenzie Graves, stares through his pince-nez in disbelief at the openness of such a brazen show: an aptly foreign response doubtless reflecting the artist's own fascination at the liberality and license of the capital. In a sense the entire picture seems to be a variation on the theme of *Sadko* which continued to cause Repin so much trouble. The subject, as Repin outlined it to Iseev, depicts Sadko, "the naive Russian youth", selecting his bride from a parade of the most beautiful women of all ages and countries, and, faithful to his heart, choosing the last, the homely Russian

girl. Repin described the scene as "brightly lit by electric light" (a curious idea for an underwater scene), a mixture of exotic plant and fish life, and rounded off: "This picture reflects my own situation. In Europe, with all its wonders, I feel just like Sadko; I am dazzled."⁵⁶ The interior of *A Parisian Café*, its electric lights glowing in the depths of the canvas, the exotic life of a strange, alien but fascinating society, with the unseen artist as the naive, be-dazzled Russian, make this painting almost a pendant to *Sadko*. Eventually, much to the satisfaction of Stasov, Repin too disavowed the enticements of Parisian art and returned to Russian subjects.

A Parisian Café is one of the most interesting and uncharacteristic of Repin's paintings. Though somewhat darkened by time one can still discern some finely painted aspects, especially so the beautiful, polychromatic silk shawl, worn by the seated woman to the right of 'Gérôme', which is painted with fastidious attention and vivacious colouring. The mood of the picture, if one allows for a diminution of brightness over the years, is in keeping with Repin's early castigation of the darkness of much French painting.⁵⁷

For a Russian artist, however, the subject was controversial. Early misgivings were sounded by Polenov's uncle, Fyodor Chizhov, who saw the work in progress at Repin's studio. He was disturbed by the irrelevant subject matter and felt it could too easily degenerate into a mere parade of current fashions.⁵⁸ Polenov, though unsympathetic to such themes, defended Repin on the ground that "daily life, frock-coats and vests" were worth painting if done in "an academic, routine way".⁵⁹ One presumes by this that Polenov meant as an exercise in verisimilitude, but his comment has curious echoes of modernist critics, like Baudelaire, who as far back as 1845 had stated:

"The painter, the true painter for whom we are looking, will be he who can snatch its epic quality from the life of today and can make us see and understand, with brush or with pencil, how great and poetic we are in our cravats and our patent-leather boots."⁶⁰

Or Champfleury, who maintained that important subjects were to be found in the "serious representation of present-day personalities, the derbies, the black dress-coats, the polished shoes..."⁶¹

To be 'modern' at this time hinged less on how one painted, though this was soon to assume primary importance, than on what one painted, and to be modern meant to paint contemporaneity. Though Repin had already contributed to this stream of thought (what could be more contemporary than the *Burlaki*?) the attempt to depict an essentially alien *milieu* was a laudable endeavour. He certainly showed none of Perov's irresolution in the face of similar subject matter and this, and other canvases of his Parisian period, are strikingly dissimilar to the conventional historical tableaux Polenov was then producing.⁶²

Nevertheless Repin's work was hampered by an academic outlook and he appears to have been ultimately unfitted for the self-imposed task. Only a few years after the completion of *A Parisian Café* Manet painted a group of four café scenes, including *Le bon Bock* (Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 1873), on which he and Repin might even have shared the same model. Apart from the extreme compositional differences between the two (Repin's figures are all carefully arranged to assist a reading of the events whereas Manet was by now making daring use of close-cropped, apparently random compositions, presenting in effect a fragment of a scene) what typifies the modern 'actuality' of Manet's work is the total absence of anecdote, a feature which springs unchecked from Repin's canvas. An academic training followed by close subjection to the tenets of Stasov's judgmentary ideology meant that except in his smaller, less 'serious' paintings, Repin was incapable of relinquishing the narrative element. When the burden of producing meaningful art was lifted, as it was during the trip to Normandy, he was capable of producing bright, spontaneous, freely-worked paintings without a hint of anecdote, a fact clearly born out by the surviving studies for *A Parisian Café* which are expressively painted with an ease and dexterity sadly obscured in the final work. (Ill. 12).⁶³

Kramskoy was slow to spot that *A Parisian Café* was a potentially calamitous subject for a young Russian painter, indeed the heated exchange with Repin did not take place until the Autumn of 1875, some months after the picture had been exhibited. Both he and Stasov knew about the painting; Repin had outlined its content at the inception of work⁶⁴ and had corresponded with Kramskoy about the painting's poor showing at the *Salon*.⁶⁵ The ideological alarm-bells only began ringing

in Russia when the landscape painter, Arkhip Kuindzhi, brought news from Paris of Repin's new picture, describing it as a mistake, a scandal even.⁶⁶ Kramskoy was well aware of Repin's change in temperament, away from purely judgmental or nationalistic art. The year before he had boasted of his new-found artistic liberty:

"I have now completely forgotten how to reflect and pass judgment and I do not regret the loss of this faculty which used to consume me; on the contrary, I would rather it never return, though I feel that back within my dear homeland it will reclaim its right over me - it is the climate! May God save Russian art from its corrosive analysis. When will it force its way out of this fog? It is a misfortune which terribly binds it to barren, technical accuracy and rational concepts in ideas, drawn from political economy. How far removed from poetry is such a situation! But this is a transitional period; a lively reaction is taking place among the young generation producing things full of life, force and harmony..."⁶⁷

Nevertheless Kramskoy seems to have been genuinely stunned and surprised by Kuindzhi's report and challenged Repin:

"You did not talk to me about the subject of your painting, I only heard about it. Fine. But one thing I do not understand; how could you come to paint this?...I thought you had far firmer convictions regarding the chief conditions of art, its means, and especially its national strain...art is not a science and it is strong only when it is national. You will say, what about universality? Yes, but the universal in art comes only through a national form and if there are cosmopolitan, international motives, they lie in the distant past, from which all peoples are now equally distant...I do not say that this is not a subject, what else would it be! Only it is not for us. We should have heard *chansons* from the cradle...In a word we should need to be French."⁶⁸

In replying Repin denied that there could be such a thing as a "main condition of art", a phrase Kramskoy had used in rebuking him. This, he contended, was a subjective matter since "truth" in art shifted its position from one generation to another; what is held dearly by one becomes an irrelevance for the next. Accordingly art is a product of individual temperaments and the "special national strain", which Kramskoy believed he was forsaking, was an intrinsic one: *A Parisian Café* was bound to reflect a Ukrainian's view of Paris, however much Repin might try otherwise. Had he been born French it

would have been a different picture.⁶⁹ Refuting Kramskoy's allegation that he had painted a subject without the command of the appropriate language Repin concluded:

"On the question of language you are mistaken. The language spoken by everybody is of little interest, whereas an original one is always sooner heard, and there is a perfect example here: Manet and all the impressionists [sic]."⁷⁰

Repin ended by saying that the whole scandal had baffled him. He had been glad to see his work in comparison with almost 5,000 others, if only for his technical edification, and that was all. But he did not relent on his right to paint freely on the subject of his choice.

Stasov, who did not enter the fray at this stage, had already pre-empted Repin's apostasy in a flagrantly divisive attempt to publicly misrepresent him by publishing an edited version of Repin's letters from Italy and Paris. These portrayed him as contemptuous of the Italian masters and of current trends, and promoted a predictable picture of an ardent nationalist.⁷¹ Though Repin took both Stasov and Kramskoy to task⁷² he had little idea of how much injury had been caused to his domestic reputation until he returned to Russia in 1876. The damage done by Stasov, to counteract Repin's variable but by no means revolutionary views, caused not only an immediate scandal but is still persistent. Benois' summation of Repin's reaction to the West, that "he criticised Italian masters like a barbarian and was perplexed by Parisian developments"⁷³ is echoed over a hundred years after Stasov's original misrepresentation as: "Repin found nothing to admire in European painting - he had more than his fair share of arrogance - and was only too happy to return to Russia."⁷⁴

A Parisian Café caused Repin much consternation and was an experiment he did not repeat. Whilst defending his choice of subject matter to Kramskoy it was nevertheless clear that he was coming to relish his foreign sojourn less with the passage of time. Though he sincerely tried to assimilate himself to his Parisian surroundings they had a vitiating effect on his output and little he touched turned to success. Contending with the ramifications of *A Parisian Café*, its rejection by those close to him and the poor showing at the *Salon*, he was simultaneously engaged in a number of projects which were faring

no better. Chief amongst these was the ill-fated portrait of Turgenev, which once more found him used as an ideological shuttle-cock. Turgenev decried tendentiousness and, as Stasov put it, "worshipped the authority of Western Europe". In turn Turgenev accused Stasov of a "nihilistic" attitude towards European art, with Stasov replying that the writer was "the enemy of all innovation in art" and "the enemy of realism and living truths".⁷⁵ They had similar disagreements concerning music.⁷⁶

Portrait of Ivan Turgenev (1874)

The commission to paint Turgenev came from Tretyakov, who suggested Repin call on the writer, then staying in Paris with the Viardots.⁷⁷ Apart from the scorn Turgenev heaped upon *The Slavonic Composers*, Repin's first meeting with the writer, in 1871, when the painter Ge brought him to see work on the *Burlaki*, had not been propitious. Turgenev gave an amusing imitation of the speech and manners of the painter Aleksandr Ivanov,⁷⁸ who Repin venerated, and who he felt was being belittled and patronized.⁷⁹ An added irritant was the increasingly acrimonious correspondence between Stasov and Turgenev. Despite misgivings over *The Slavonic Composers* Turgenev was initially well-disposed towards Repin,⁸⁰ but as time progressed Stasov's unstinting praise of the artist became irksome.

For Repin the association with Turgenev had benefits beyond the prestige of the commission. Between March 1874 and April 1876, despite the rancour between Stasov and the writer, he was introduced to such luminaries as Camille Saint-Saëns and most importantly to the champion of realist art and literature, soon to be the proponent of the Impressionists, Émile Zola.⁸¹

Tretyakov agreed to take the portrait if it turned out well and Repin soon wrote to Stasov that work was progressing with sittings each morning, though Turgenev had not been content with the face which, he thought, made him look like a "smiling, shameless débauché".⁸² Accordingly he re-painted the head, a decision he later bitterly regretted, attributing Turgenev's dissatisfaction to the influence of Mme. Viardot, whom he described as the writer's sole

guide in matters of taste and judgment.⁸³

The second version went badly, a situation not facilitated by Turgenev plaguing Repin with his admiration for Kharlamov. Stasov and Turgenev were soon waging verbal war over their respective preferences for the two artists. Turgenev was the more restrained of the two, finding time to compliment Repin's character and ability as well as *A Parisian Café*, but sticking to his belief that Kharlamov was the greatest contemporary portrait painter,⁸⁴ though in retrospect Kharlamov's light, delicate style of portraiture, with its unincisive, flattering softness and glamourized likenesses, seems an unlikely contender for such flattery. Kharlamov was then studying under Léon Bonnat, who was at the height of his popularity and Repin made no concealment of what he regarded as the artist's blatant grasp at fashionable success. In 1875 he recounted to Kramskoy how the artist Carolus Duran had spoken condescendingly of Kharlamov, not even considering him an artist, and that French artists also had a low opinion of him.⁸⁵ Repin's antipathy was further fuelled by Kharlamov's success, with the assistance of Turgenev and the Viardot's at the 1875 *Salon*, where *A Parisian Café* had gone unnoticed. In 1875 Zola began writing his 'Letters from Paris' for *Вестник Европы*, and on Turgenev's suggestion devoted his May letter to praise of Kharlamov's portrait of Mme. Viardot.⁸⁶

In time Turgenev's tastes for the art of Millet, Rousseau, Corot, Daubigny and the like,⁸⁷ shifted, and Repin noted with some chagrin that he was now echoing Zola's sentiments, predicting that the future belonged to the Impressionists.⁸⁸ For a time these wrangles lay dormant, but Turgenev's promotion of Kharlamov placed a decided strain on their relationship.

In April 1874 Repin told Tretyakov that he had only one sitting left and would then send on the work.⁸⁹ Turgenev was very pleased with it, predicting that it would confer great honour on the artist, and suggested it be exhibited in Paris where he was then enjoying great popularity with his story *A Living Relic*. The Viardots too were pleased (Pauline described it as a "faultless likeness") and Bogolyubov praised its simplicity, saying it was the best portrait he had seen of Turgenev.⁹⁰ On removing the work to his studio Repin felt

that it needed some corrections to the accessories and background, which he completed. He forwarded the portrait to Moscow in May.

In the meantime doubts set in (a feeling Turgenev was soon to share) and he wrote ahead to Tretyakov pre-empting criticism by saying he wished Turgenev had not rejected the first and best version.⁹¹ As feared, Tretyakov was not pleased, finding the face too red and warm. Repin agreed but his attempts to correct what he described as "involuntary mistakes"⁹² did not help. In 1878-79, when Turgenev was in Moscow, he tried again to recapture the spirit of the first version without success.⁹³ Even Stasov later conceded that the work was Repin's "sole failure".⁹⁴

Repin's relationship with Turgenev was never happy, though he made further attempts at painting him in 1879 and 1883⁹⁵ and illustrated his *Stories for Children*, published in Moscow in 1883.⁹⁶ But the rancour between Turgenev and Stasov struck a sour note which could never quite be eradicated, and when Stasov began enthusing about Vasily Maksimov, an uncompromising exponent of the critical peasant genre, Turgenev had had enough, replying testily:

"I am not in the least doubtful about the unworthiness (in my eyes) of Mr. Maksimov...whom I am at once adding to the list of your beloved Messrs. Dargomyzhskiis,...Repins, *i tutti quanti*. And concerning Repin, it is time for him to return under your wing, even better to Moscow. These are his background and milieu."⁹⁷

Repin was hurt, or rather piqued, by Turgenev's dismissive attitude, but more so by his preference for Kharlamov's artistic confections, blaming their inability to get along on the fact that his reputation had preceded him: an implicit criticism of Stasov's handling. But Turgenev was culpable: "We were idealists with a social tinge and Turgenev, after all, was an aesthete."⁹⁸

The finished work depicts a stern, stout figure clad in a dark jacket and blue scarf, his legs covered with a plaid blanket, like an elderly habitué of the bath-chair, gazing impassively at the viewer. Its lack of conviction was, however, in large part the result of special circumstances, a clear example of ideological concerns coming to bear, detrimentally, on the aesthetic outcome of a work of art. The

wrangles between Stasov and Turgenev, in which Repin became unavoidably embroiled, were but one more reflection of the Slavophile-Westernisers debate, with Stasov promoting (and wilfully misrepresenting) Repin as a radical nationalist and Turgenev, perhaps just as wilfully, eager to ally himself with new aesthetic trends which he perceived as in keeping with the promulgation of Western enlightenment: what Repin described as his "French ways"⁹⁹ of looking at art, a statement the writer would undoubtedly have approved.

Reactions to Impressionism and Western art

Repin's years in Paris coincided with the first Impressionist exhibition in April 1874, the same time he started work on *A Parisian Café*. He makes scant mention of this crowning manifestation of discontent with academic precepts, and clearly did not invest it with the importance which history, with hindsight, has bestowed upon the event. He was nevertheless aware of the exhibition, which shows an improvement in attitude since Perov's days, and was ahead of contemporaries like Kramskoy, who admitted during his 1876 visit to Paris: "I had no idea that these impressionists are such a burning issue here."¹⁰⁰ On the occasion of the first exhibition Repin noted:

"Amongst the French there has recently appeared a new realistic tendency, or rather a *caricature* of one - it is awful, scandalous - but there is something."¹⁰¹

Repin barely concerned himself with either the style or content of Impressionist works, his interests centering on sympathy towards their attempts to cut free from the Academy. He wrote to Tretyakov¹⁰² of the problems faced by the "realists" in gaining exhibition space and fulminated to Kramskoy, with his own case in mind, of the iniquity of the *Salon* jury system, which ostracised so many good painters.¹⁰³ But his attitude towards the Impressionist school naturally hardened when he learned that Turgenev, at Zola's prompting, was now hailing them as the future for French art.¹⁰⁴

Repin's most positive comments regarding the Impressionists were

made during or after the exchange with Kramskoy over the merits of painting a contemporary café scene, and his assertion that Manet and the Impressionists spoke with a new and original voice¹⁰⁵ is rarely supported in scores of letters crammed with his observations of other, more mainstream artists. Another remark, made in connection with Repin's concern for direct, spontaneous work as a means to capturing the moment: "I admire all the expressionists, who are gaining increasing recognition here",¹⁰⁶ is an interesting comment on his artistic awareness, but remains one of a few isolated mentions of the school, in this instance placed cheek-by-jowl with a report of work on *Sadko* and of Polenov's progress with *Le Droit du Seigneur*, two particularly unspontaneous paintings.

Remarks regarding the Impressionists are secondary to the fact that his work in Paris shows little sign of an influence from that quarter. It has been suggested that familiarity with the new trends led him to brighten his palette,¹⁰⁷ a claim substantiated in a few minor works, but which does not hold up when considering *A Parisian Café*, *Sadko*, the portrait of Turgenev, nor a clutch of other works from this period which will be discussed in due course.¹⁰⁸ *A Parisian Café* and *Sadko* both make use of strong colouration, the latter especially, but neither is remotely spontaneous nor is the colour natural or local as in Impressionist painting. And the technique, meticulous as ever, is far removed from the light, sketchy brushwork of the French artists.

The technical approach is the key to differentiating between suggestions that Repin was influenced by the Impressionists,¹⁰⁹ and the physical evidence which suggests otherwise. Repin was tied to a conventional notion which distinguished between the sketch as an *aide-mémoire*, and a finished 'serious' work, requiring pre-planning, arrangement, and elucidation of a significant content.

Only when relieved of the pressures of living up to the expectations of others, whether of Stasov, Kramskoy, Iseev, or his own exacting standards, did Repin's work show signs of the spontaneity and naturalism which characterises French painters. In the summer of 1875 Repin accompanied Bogolyubov, Savitsky, Polenov, Beggrov and Dobrovolsky to Veules in Normandy where Bogolyubov had worked previously. As with his former periods of 'freedom', in the

countryside around St. Petersburg and during the Volga expedition, Repin became animated, throwing himself into a furious routine of itinerant sketching and painting, even being rebuked by the others for considering painting on a Sunday.¹¹⁰

Describing Veules to Kramskoy, Repin painted a picture of agrarian fecundity, picturesque scenery and rural social-awareness, an artistic paradise comparable to Gauguin's Tahiti: an unheard of abundance of fruit, huts covered in ivy, pears the size of two fists, prosperous peasants ("better-off than we paupers") and each household subscribing to some journal which they read communally in the evenings after work.¹¹¹ The paintings which resulted from this utopian interlude are clear evidence of a mood of liberation from the claustrophobic atmosphere of Paris.

A Beggar-girl. Veules (1874, Ill. 13) is a charming example of how, even with such an emotive subject, Repin could divest himself of heavy-handed social comment without falling prey to sentimentality. Though painted with well-defined detail and devotion to the rough textures of the girl's ragged clothes, and conceived on a tightly-drawn structure, the brush-work is discernibly more rapid, the background being no more than a conglomeration of fragmentary strokes and pure dabs of colour. This unassuming portrait, bathed in light under a burning blue sky, has a vibrancy of colour totally absent from Repin's larger canvases, and strongly retains the sense of immediacy which generally deserted his finished paintings.¹¹²

This painterly freedom is taken to further extremes in a number of small paintings and landscapes bereft of anecdote. *The Mill*¹¹³ for instance, depicting an over-grown water-mill amongst sun-specked foliage, and *A Horse for Transporting Stones* (1874, Ill. 14), a laconic, sun-lit work depicting a stoically patient white horse on a beach, rigged out with wicker panniers. The light, predominantly blue and white palette of this painting, with its roughly-hewn scenery and inconsequential subject matter, epitomises the every-day, unselective objectivity characteristic of modern French painting.¹¹⁴

Following his return to Paris the lingering influence of Veules can be seen in a number of similarly small, casual and uneventful views of the city: *The Outskirts of Paris. Montmartre* (Kirov Art Gallery,

1874), *The Road to Montmartre* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1876) and *Parisian Study. Boy by a Wall. Montmartre* (Radishchev Art Gallery, Saratov, 1876). All are non-selective, mundane, apparently random views, allowing the artist to concentrate on the play of light and handling of colour which, in these examples, is exceptionally free.¹¹⁵ These are in marked contrast to the small, detailed scenes of Parisian street life which Repin executed on his arrival in Paris. *News-seller in Paris* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1873), or the sketch *Conjuror on a Parisian Boulevard* (Private Collection, Paris, 1874), compact crowd scenes in keeping with Perov's French works of the 1860s.¹¹⁶

The influence of Impressionism seems not to have had a direct, and certainly not a lasting influence on Repin's output, but unlike Perov before him, or Kramskoy, he was certainly aware of the events of 1874 and even greeted them with warm but distinctly guarded interest. One could certainly not up-hold the view that: "The shimmering radiance of impressionism broke unregarded about him..."¹¹⁷

Of contemporary 'modern' painters Repin is most often linked with the name of Manet, who had then been the subject of controversy for over a decade. Though he never invited the attention and never exhibited with them, Manet's name was continually linked with the Impressionists. A child of the Academy (he studied under Thomas Couture, the epitome of the *Salon* artist), Manet turned away from Academic works to study the likes of Hals (he was in Haarlem in 1856) and especially the Spanish painters Velazquez, Murillo, Ribera and Goya, whom he copied in the Louvre. From such influences he developed an independent style which was academic in its strong dependence on form and disciplined technique, but which employed harsh, dark toning, a severe form of chiaroscuro, with the virtual elimination of half tones, and which was, moreover, put to the unorthodox service of depicting contemporary subject matter.

In 1863, following the scandal of *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* and the closure of the *Salon des Refusés*, Manet mounted his own showing of 14 works which was enthusiastically welcomed by Baudelaire. Greater notoriety came from the outrage of 1865 when *Olympia* was aberrantly accepted by the *Salon* and in the ensuing press fury only Baudelaire and Zola defended him.

It is interesting that the same letter in which Repin proffered a reserved judgment on the Impressionists (... "awful, scandalous - but there is something") ends by saying that his thoughts are currently on Velazquez and Spain,¹¹⁸ as Manet seems the natural choice for a painter of Repin's temperament. Both shared a realistic outlook, lacking affinity with subjects not seen at first-hand, and were at their best depicting tangible, observed phenomena, but where Manet observed impassively, objectively, Repin had neither the inclination nor desire to put aside his individual, emotional input, nor to renounce narrative. Both men converged however in their integrity. Repin's preoccupation with artistic honesty, his horror of a fashionable adoption or assimilation to the style of others,¹¹⁹ finds reflection in Manet's comment: "The artist does not say to-day, 'Come and see faultless works,' but, 'Come and see sincere works.'"¹²⁰

Repin first mentions Manet during the unsuccessful showing of *A Parisian Café*, telling Kramskoy that he has not the time to consider "the unbridled freedom of the Impressionists (Manet. Monet and others), or their childish truths, when, with gigantic steps, Fortuny stalks the horizon."¹²¹ This attitude softened when, upholding his right to paint an unfamiliar Parisian subject, he indicated "Manet and all of the impressionists"¹²² as a good example of how originality outshines the familiar. The tone is progressive but the thought, much like Repin's artistic progress in *Veules*, is not elucidated: he is chiefly concerned to dissuade Kramskoy's adverse comments. This enthusiasm appears to have flagged when he wrote, again to Kramskoy, of Manet's rejection at the 1876 *Salon*:

"This time they have rejected Manet at the *Salon* and he has now mounted an exhibition in his studio. There is nothing new in his work, it is all the same; but his *Canoers* is not bad, and to reject it was certainly a mistake; it would have added interest to the *Salon*."¹²³

Repin concludes this letter with a tirade against the "mediocrity" of the *Salon* jury: "Cabanel, Bonnat and so forth", and seems to regard Manet's worth primarily as that of an outsider who, though his work is getting repetitive, deserves better than endless official rebuttals. Nowhere is there unqualified praise for Manet, and with the exception

of some of the sketches for *A Parisian Café* it is difficult to identify an abiding artistic influence. In July-August 1875 Stasov was in Paris, working in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and together they visited many exhibitions and galleries, including a large Manet exhibition at Durrand-Reul's gallery.¹²⁴ A few months later Repin and Sergei Tretyakov visited the Durrand-Reul Gallery where they saw Manet's works, after which Repin was moved to paint an impromptu portrait, telling Stasov: "I have done a portrait of Vera (à la Manet) in the space of two hours."¹²⁵

This portrait appears severally in different publications as either a portrait of Repin's wife, or of his daughter, the latter often misquoted as "little Vera". The portrait of Repin's daughter (1874, Ill. 15), though done in a sketchy, broad manner, was wrongly dated to 1875 by Repin's biographer Igor Grabar, and erroneously titled as a portrait of "Verunya Repina".¹²⁶ The difference in dates between the portrait and Repin's letter makes it highly unlikely that this is the portrait described as "à la Manet". A portrait of Repin's wife (1875, Ill. 16) now seems the most likely contender. Though it is dated on the canvas 1876 Soviet research suggests that it was painted in 1875 and signed later; a practice fairly common to Repin. Investigation of the paint layer points towards the use of heavily diluted oil (to speed up the drying process), without any repainting, which suggests a single sitting.¹²⁷ It seems likely therefore that the latter is the portrait à la Manet.¹²⁸ Apart from the obvious haste with which the portrait of Repin's daughter was executed, there seems nothing in style, nor in the studied pose, which would lead one to associate it with the work of Manet. It is a thoroughly charming, relaxed sketch in oils, composed in green and gold hues with the face conventionally modelled in soft tones of flesh and bright pink.

The portrait of Repin's wife bears similar traces of hurried application: in places the canvas is barely concealed, the brushwork is again broad, the background roughed-in with a single green, variegated only by tone. The strong light source gives the work a sharp tonal differentiation in keeping with modern French painting, but the over-all impression is of a mass of green hues enlivened only by a few highlights of white and flesh colour. As an exercise in



impromptu oil painting both portraits show a readiness to experiment, but there is little to sustain a comparison with Manet's portraits beyond Repin's passing remark. The paintings are perhaps a more interesting comment on what succeeding generations of commentators are willing to see in a painting when prompted by a verbal association.

An obscure but appropriate subject of 1873, *Study of a Model in Spanish Costume*, bears perhaps the most superficial resemblance to the work of Manet with its sharply defined use of dark and light and its laconic composition, but it is difficult to make a meaningful judgment from the small, black and white reproduction from which it is known.¹²⁹

The other great French realist, Gustave Courbet, was surprisingly absent from Repin's thoughts, warranting only one mention in his letters, and that not even on French soil. Writing from Italy of his low expectations of French art he made an exception for: "Courbet's efforts, which I now deeply respect as an impressive beginning."¹³⁰ Doubtless this was a sincere remark but it is typically enigmatic, throwing little light on precisely what Repin meant. The letter goes on to castigate idealism in art, a perennial target for Courbet, but if Repin identified with Courbet's earthy, muscular realism, and if he saw examples of Courbet's work whilst in Paris, his letters give no clue. In many of his writings Stasov was eager to associate Repin with Courbet,¹³¹ but in relation to both painters, whether by style or by content, there is no basis from which to conclude that: "After Courbet Manet was the greatest influence on Repin..."¹³²

With regard to Western art Repin, like his contemporaries, showed a marked preference for the great names of *Salon* painting: Couture, Delaroche, Fortuny, Meissonnier, Gérôme, Neuville and Regnault. Léon Bonnat, who took Kharlamov under his wing, is the recipient of continual derision¹³³ for his pursuit of fashionable, facile, money-spinning themes. Corot too comes in for some harsh comments though Repin later modified his attitude towards this very popular artist. On arrival in Paris he described French artists as "all tricksters, like Corot",¹³⁴ and in 1874 blamed the derivative nature of much French painting to slavish copying of Corot's sweet style. He recounted how a young Frenchman had joked continually, and very loudly, with some

models at a café, over his disregard for Corot. On realising that Polenov was an artist he made apology for his remarks, to which Repin mused: "If only he knew how we spoke of him!"¹³⁵ But a few months later he decided that there were some good things to be said of the artist as a naive, yet truthful and poetic painter with a superb sense of colour.¹³⁶

Prominent amongst the artists Repin admired was Carolus Duran, a disciple of Courbet who later was tutor to Sargent. A reported disparagement of Kharlamov by Carolus-Duran, mentioned in the appreciative letter on Corot, doubtless increased Repin's admiration for the artist, but both in style and temperament Carolus-Duran, who painted strong, photographic portraits with an assured manner, was a painter Repin was bound to feel an affinity with.¹³⁷

Repin also pays compliment to the history paintings of Paul Delaroche,¹³⁸ the sharp realism of Alfonse Neuville's battle pictures¹³⁹ and to the exotic works of Henri Regnault.¹⁴⁰ The daring and impressively savage *Execution without Trial under the Moorish Kings of Granada* (Musée d'Orsay, 1870) is virtually all that is now remembered of this talented but lurid painter.

Repin's most consistent and unqualified praise goes to Mariano Fortuny who, through Chistyakov's classes at the Academy, he and his peers had been warned was an artist of unusual ability and brilliant accomplishments.¹⁴¹ At the 1875 *Salon*, where *A Parisian Café* was skyed, he was in raptures, prompting his previously quoted comment that he had no time for "the unbridled freedom of the Impressionists (Manet, Monet and others), or their childish truths, when, with gigantic steps, Fortuny stalks the horizon...Long live Fortuny!!!".¹⁴² Kramskoy, in criticising *A Parisian Café*, sought to disparage Fortuny by appealing to Repin's social conscience, saying that his and Neuville's art was underpinned by bourgeois values which, at their heart, rested upon exploitation of the poor.¹⁴³

Undaunted, Repin replied peremptorily that the bourgeoisie had not the slightest appreciation of Fortuny and that his worth had been "acknowledged by artists the world over." His works, Repin asserted, attracted huge sums because they were "rarities, diamonds" and he concluded that the bourgeoisie knew "damn all" about art.¹⁴⁴ Polenov

also joined in the debate, writing to Kramskoy that he considered Fortuny's work the apogee of pure art and repeating Repin's *bon mot* that "After him [Fortuny] even nature seems conventional, artificial."¹⁴⁵

Though in his large and rather fussy works Fortuny bears little resemblance to the style of Repin, his realistic technique, using strong but subdued colour to suggest, rather than record fine detail, especially in his smaller paintings, bears a strong affinity with Repin's mature works, suggesting that his adoration for the artist did indeed have a lasting effect. Fortuny's *The Snake Charmers* for instance (Pushkin Museum, Moscow, 1870) is very similar to Repin's style and, but for the obviously exotic, eastern subject matter, might pass for a work by the Russian artist.

Repin did also pass praise on artists who were to find wider appreciation with the next generation. Bastien-Lepage for instance was much admired by the second generation of Peredvizhnik painters, such as Nesterov, Serov, Levitan and Vrubel,¹⁴⁶ but Repin was early to laud the artist's work.¹⁴⁷

Quite clearly Repin concerned himself more with established French painters than he did with iconoclasts like Manet and the Impressionists, a fact reflected not only in his letters but also in his work. *A Negro Woman* (1875-1876, Ill.17), reminiscent of Fortuny's and Regnault's orientalism, is perhaps the only one of Repin's French paintings which shows a discernible debt to the work of others. This exotic canvas was, like *A Parisian Café*, untypical of Repin's paintings and was exhibited in Paris without the Academy's permission, Repin begging Stasov to keep this strictly secret from the Academic Secretary.¹⁴⁸

Of Repin's Parisian paintings this is a particularly satisfying example.¹⁴⁹ The work depicts a soleful but confident woman sitting in a relaxed, cross-legged pose. The accessories, such as the hookah-pipe, coffee-pot and bowl on a tray, and a discarded slipper, are fine still-lives of ceramic, metallic and brocaded materials, as are the woman's silken clothes and jewelry: both the large pearls in her drop-earrings and the dazzling necklace made of gold discs and chains can rival the textural splendour of Fortuny's and Regnault's views of the

east. Behind the showy façade is an accomplished and sympathetic portrait. The high shimmering brow, large dark eyes, and resolute set of the mouth all lend a solemn dignity to the sitter, and the hands, elongated and delicately painted, fall onto the woman's lap in a graceful and artfully conceived pose.

It is a shame that this un-Russian, un-heroic example of Repin's technical ability and human insight is now so badly dimmed. Reproductions tend to enhance the colour and the actual painting, dark and obscured, is disappointing. The brilliance of the original is however clearly visible on close inspection and tends only to confirm the painter's fascination with contemporary exotic French canvases.

Between the exhibition of *A Parisian Café* and the execution of this work Repin and Polenov travelled to London in the company of Bridgeman, Pearce, Szyndler and Zeitner, engaging in a furious round of gallery-going and sight-seeing. In a long and enthusiastic letter to Stasov¹⁵⁰ Repin singled out his highlights: the National Gallery, Kensington Museum, Crystal Palace, the Parthenon Frieze, and the works of Rembrandt, Wilkie and Edwin Long, in particular the latter's large canvas *The Babylonian Marriage Market* (Royal Holloway College, 1875).¹⁵¹ Though lacking the drama of this vastly populated picture *A Negro Woman* shares its oriental theme and doubtless Long's work was not far from his mind when the painting was conceived.

The taste for the exotic and the fantastic found its fullest expression however in the extraordinary painting *Sadko* (1876, Ill. 18), which, intermittently, occupied the artist throughout his stay in Paris, causing him much anguish as his belief in the picture slowly subsided under the profusion of impressions that Parisian life had to offer.

Sadko in the Underwater Kingdom (1876)

When Repin first outlined this work he gave Iseev a description of one which would test his technical ability and establish his position as a painter of Russian themes.

"The subject is as follows: Sadko, in the depths of the sea, in the fantastic palace of the Sea King, selects a bride. In front

of him parade the most beautiful maidens of all ages and countries: Grecian, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, French and so on (brilliance and elegance of costumes, beauty of forms). The scene takes place amongst the most fantastic architecture of the Moorish and Indian type - fountains, colonnades, staircases, and everything is brightly lit by electric light against the deep background of the ocean bed...

...In each of the beautiful women I will attempt to depict (not too overtly) the ideals of the greatest, best loved artists - Praxitiles, Raphael, Veronese, Titian, Murillo, Rembrandt, Rubens and so forth."¹⁵²

Iseev officially commissioned the work to ameliorate Repin's financial distress, but almost immediately the artist expressed dissatisfaction with it, telling Stasov it was fit only for decoration¹⁵³ and later passing his celebrated remark about losing the ability or the desire to pass judgment.¹⁵⁴ The work on *A Parisian Café* pushed *Sadko* to one side and at one point Repin brushed the painting out to re-work the composition.¹⁵⁵

He resumed painting after his visit to London but without enthusiasm, pushing himself into work only when approaching it from a realistic standpoint. He began researching in the libraries and Stasov suggested useful works, including an *Atlas of the Microscopic and Marine Worlds*.¹⁵⁶ At this late stage he also started life studies, using Viktor Vasnetsov as the model for *Sadko*.¹⁵⁷ The composition underwent many changes¹⁵⁸ and in early 1876 Repin reported to Stasov: "You would not now recognise my painting *Sadko*, it is so changed and repainted - it is an entirely different picture."¹⁵⁹

But this burst of enthusiasm again flagged and though he saw the commission through he told Stasov:

"I am making a secret confession. I am terribly disappointed with my painting *Sadko*. I would destroy it with pleasure. It will turn out such trash, from every point of view. Please don't tell anything of this to anyone. I have decided to finish it despite everything, and then return to Russia. It is time to start working seriously on something better. Here my affairs are not worth a penny; it is simply painful. My conscience bothers me. All my art represents a form of gymnastics, nothing else, for it lacks feeling, it lacks evidence of a single thought."¹⁶⁰

Repin was not the only dissatisfied party. In Paris Kramskoy reported to Tretyakov:

"I was not happy with our pensioners Repin and Polenov, and neither are they happy with Paris. They are both soon returning to Russia... Repin has not been lost, but he has somehow withered and faded. He needs to go back; there we will see the old Repin again. Everything he did here has the mark of weariness and exhaustion; he has clearly not felt a genuine interest in his work."¹⁶¹

Painted reluctantly and with eventual aversion it would be surprising if the work was not flawed. The frivolity of the theme could hardly incline itself towards the critical sensibilities of

Stasov and other socially-minded critics,¹⁶² though the painting did carry the recommendation of being thoroughly Russian.

The best parts of the painting are the depictions of marine life. Here the imagination which Stasov denied Repin possessed is most fertile. Ranging from dark, shadowy umbrella shapes of menacing jelly-fish in the high background, through to the silver under-bellies of fish shining in the gloom, the picture is a surreal fantasy of the under-sea Kingdom: curiously anthropomorphic sea life, gelatinous, wet-eyed and tentacled,¹⁶³ weave in and out of the lush, tropical, alien flora which is arrayed with hundreds of air bubbles, glistening like pearls. Tiny sea horses and metallic fishes, crustacea and a large shimmering goldfish complete the iridescent array of marine biology. The centre of the picture radiates a soft warm glow which gives way to a menacing gloom towards the outer edges of the canvas. The female figures, with the exception of the Persian maid, for whom Repin found a particularly striking ethnic model,¹⁶⁴ are all typically European, contrary to his original desire to depict the beauties of all ages and races. All are clothed in bright, highly reflective materials which compliment the decorative marine display.

Reviewing the progress of Russian art in 1882-1883, Stasov used *Sadko* as an example of how Repin, the Russian-realist artist *par excellence*, could be seen to flounder when tackling fantasy. Though praising the technical prowess displayed in painting the female figures, the effect of light in the under-sea gloom, the fluctuating

movement of the waves, and the cornucopia of deep-sea life as "truly magnificent", he maintained that this was so because the painter had recorded effects observed in gigantic aquaria in London and Paris. He therefore upheld his opinion that Repin painted well only from observable facts and not from fancy.¹⁶⁵

There is a degree of truth here but the imaginative input probably deserves more credit. Repin could certainly not have observed from life the effect of sunlight underwater on a train of over a dozen women. But this was a drum which Stasov beat relentlessly over many decades and his reaction to Repin's history paintings, as unobserved phenomena, follow the same line of reasoning.

Miscellaneous works from Repin's Parisian period

Repin was extraordinarily active throughout his stay in the French capital, fulfilling many minor but note-worthy canvases and even branching out into commercial production. From the proceeds of sale from *Sadko*, and from the sale of a few small works to the French dealer Duboile, Repin hoped to finance a working holiday in the countryside. The lack of restraint and of artistic pressures which had characterised his stay in Veules was doubtless uppermost in his mind. He planned to further subsidise the venture, in collaboration with Polenov, Savitsky, Dmitriyev-Orenburgsky and Bogolyubov, through the sale of some decorative plates, which were produced towards the end of 1875-early 1876.¹⁶⁶

The railway magnate S. S. Polyakov agreed to advance the artists 1000 francs for studio and production costs, and though Stasov was anxious that Repin might neglect his painting¹⁶⁷ he went to the trouble of securing sales for them in St. Petersburg, advising the Museum of the Society for the Lovers of Art to purchase examples.¹⁶⁸

Though the venture fizzled out it was a novel and enterprising idea, examples of which still survive. These include a plate in honour of Polyakov's railway enterprises depicting Savitsky's celebrated *Repair-work on the Railway*. Repin, true to his humble origins, contributed a study of peasants in a third-class wagon.¹⁶⁹

Other oil paintings of this period include a portrait *The Jew at*

Prayer (1875. Ill. 19). Bogolyubov, who claimed he had not seen another of Repin's works with such strong colour and simplicity, recommended the painting to Tretyakov.¹⁷⁰ Repin told Stasov that he had received many compliments on the picture when it was at the framers and the dealer Dubois had pressed him to do something for him to sell.¹⁷¹ For a long time he received no word from Tretyakov and feared a repeat of the affair over Turgenev's portrait, but the collector was much pleased by the work and paid the 500 roubles asked.¹⁷² The painting today still has the freshness of colour that so impressed Bogolyubov and is a reminder of how Repin's other, darker paintings, might once have looked. The technique is very broad but never sloppy and the sensitive treatment of the aged face makes it one of Repin's most sensitive and humane portraits.

Sadko was by no means the only native subject Repin tackled in Paris. As he had suggested to Stasov in April 1874, Little Russia cried out to him to be painted, and these subjects, when placed in context with *A Parisian Café* and his Normandy pictures, show a conflicting and often contradictory nature at work. A small painting entitled *Stranniki* (1875) or religious pilgrims is mentioned in passing as a work in progress, and seems to have been a harbinger of the peasant scenes Repin was to return to in Chuguyev, shortly after leaving France.¹⁷³

From the moment he arrived in France Repin became home-sick for the Ukraine, telling Stasov he wished to return there as soon as possible.¹⁷⁴ During his happiest times in France he found affinity with his homeland, remarking of Veules: "It is terribly like our own Little Russia".¹⁷⁵ He did not however set about painting these themes until the following year with the first of two decorative portraits of young women in Ukrainian costume. The first, *Ukrainian Girl*, dates to 1875 and is mentioned in September of that year as being almost completed.¹⁷⁶ The second, *Ukrainian Girl by a Wicker Fence* is dated 1876, and mentioned specifically by Repin as a three-quarter length painting.¹⁷⁷ Here Repin says that he is sending the painting to be exhibited in London on the invitation of a M. Dechamps. It was eventually sold however in late 1876-early 1877 to the same purchaser as *A Negro Woman*.¹⁷⁸ According to Soviet research the second version

was partially repainted by the artist M. V. Sosnovsky after it suffered fire damage to the background. The repainting, in lighter hues, and in contrast to Repin's description of a moonlit scene, would account for Grabar's comment that the work (when he saw it) was overly dark.¹⁷⁹

Both paintings, like *A Negro Woman*, show casual, relaxed figures in brightly coloured costumes, adorned with jewelry. Repin was much attracted to the decorative side of such scenes and wrote from Chuguyev shortly after leaving France: "Only Little Russians and Parisians know how to dress with taste...It is simply charming, charming and charming!!!"¹⁸⁰ Though these portraits have little interest now beyond their picturesque appeal, they are reminders that the unorthodoxy of *A Parisian Café*, Repin's considerations on modern artistic developments, and his memorable comments about his loss of ideological fervour, were conceived simultaneously with such conventional works as these or *Sadko*.

The experiences of France seem to have born fruit only belatedly, in a number of isolated incidents. A few of Repin's family portraits, as well as individual studies and finished paintings, show a radical lightness of touch and palette uncharacteristic of his mature output.¹⁸¹ Back in Russia, spending the summer with relatives in Krasnoe Selo, near St. Petersburg, and now distanced from Paris, Repin was again freed from the constrictions of painting to the expectations of others, and in this peaceful, relaxed environment, on Russian soil, produced his most satisfying and overtly French painting, *On the Turf Seat* (1876, Ill. 20).¹⁸²

Though not particularly related to the style of any one artist¹⁸³ this small painting shares many of the attributes of contemporary French art: uneventfulness, absence of narrative, the relaxed, apathetic figures seemingly unaware of the viewer, and the clear, brightly painted exterior, depicted, seemingly, at random, naturally, without pre-planning or attention to composition. The sitters are purposely sketched in rather than portrayed as individuals, not distracting from the sunny landscape and its effects of light which are the subject and chief concern of the artist. The roughly painted figures of Repin's infant children, playing on the grass, are charmingly evoked with no more than a few basic forms and touches of

light. Spots and patches of sunlight illuminate the grassy foreground, parts of the sitters' clothing and the foliage, whilst in the far background a few peasant izbas shine fiercely white in the heat of the day.

Two years later Repin painted a portrait of his daughter Vera, *Girl with a Bunch of Flowers*, (1878, Ill.21) which shares the same characteristics as *On the Turf Seat* but is, if anything, brighter and less finished. Here even the notion of depth has been sacrificed to the preoccupation with light and colour in an open-air environment. The figure of the girl is seen from an adult's standing viewpoint and only the inclusion of the beginnings of tree trunks in the top-left corner of the canvas, and slight tonal darkening towards the top half of the picture, suggest any spatial recession, otherwise the lack of a horizon line gives the background a slightly abstract, decorative quality.¹⁸⁴

It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from Repin's three years in Paris for the simple reason that his mercurial and sometimes confused pronouncements rarely dwell long in one place or with much consistency. On the adventurous side he was aware and not dismissive of current trends, evincing an increasingly mature outlook and a desire to form his own judgments, even if they clashed with those about him. He took stock of both the Impressionists and the wider contemporary scene, including the on-going battle between the Manet camp (including Zola) and the *Salon*. Technically he experimented with the immediacy of sketch-like portraiture and continued with the *plein air* practice utilised during his Volga trip. Not disdaining modern, foreign subject matter, he painted and sketched numerous contemporary Parisian street scenes, the most ambitious of which was *A Parisian Café*. He also risked a serious breach with the authorities at home by exhibiting various works in contravention of the Academy's regulations. But beyond isolated comments, made during widely differing states of mind, there is little to support the notion that this was a period of sustained artistic liberation, an "art for art's sake" phase.¹⁸⁵

On the conservative side he plodded on with *Sadko* when all his inclinations were against it, produced an inconsequential portrait of

Turgenev, dabbled with Russian scenes whilst thousands of miles away from home, and spasmodically made either loud nationalistic noises to Stasov, or dejected appeals for a swift return to Russia. Of his more conventional works only *A Negro Woman* and *The Jew at Prayer* suggest an affinity and enthusiasm for the task at hand, otherwise Kramskoy's report to Tretyakov, that in Paris Repin had withered and faded, has a ring of truth: certainly none of the works produced here ever assumed the status of a major production and whilst Repin's mind was exceptionally active and receptive, this was not successfully transferred to his brush. By the time he left France Repin was eager to put distractions aside and to concentrate once more on those native subjects with which he had first found acclaim. One suspects however that neither aesthetic nor ideological reasons were then uppermost in his mind, merely fatigue. In particularly weary mood he told Stasov:

"I long ago decided I would never do anything worthwhile abroad and so I would have been amazed, yes, incredulous, if something of mine had succeeded. Everything I have done here has been insipid or barren; well enough of that, I must be away home..."¹⁸⁶

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"I have become surprisingly idle since I suddenly fell upon an idea for a picture. It is the subject for a picture with which I shall be occupied now for three years or so. It is worth a lot, but I will tell no one until I have finished the picture."

Through different variations religious persecution in the Province of Novgorod, one of Repin's most distinguished works. Finally

PREFACE TO CHAPTERS 3-6

Repin's ideological and aesthetical approach to his mature works.
The genres within his *oeuvre*

Following his return from France in July of 1876, Repin was plunged afresh into disagreements with Stasov, who looked unfavourably upon his Parisian output. Though there was little real acrimony between the two Repin was aggrieved by the critic's unwillingness to consider as worthy anything other than native, contemporary scenes.¹ After a summer spent with his in-laws at Krasnoe selo, Repin moved to Chuguyev in October and began to settle down once more to painting portraits and scenes from his local surroundings, much to the approbation of Stasov, who seems to have anticipated this state of affairs:

"During these three years [Repin] was in a milieu that was harmful for him... Somewhere inside Russia he will get rid of it and regain his powers - the full power of a realist, nationalist artist... fully capable of creating and representing thoroughly national types and scenes."²

Stasov correctly divined that the sudden transition from the metropolitan *beau monde* of Paris to rural Russia would exacerbate Repin's artistic confusion, and that when he had had time to reflect, the artist would put aside his cosmopolitanism and devote himself to indigenous subjects. Repin's return to the fold was assisted by a period of calm and of successful work, which naturally inclined him towards Stasov's point of view. The peasant portraits *A Cautious One* and *Peasant with an Evil Eye* (both 1877) were followed by the resounding success of *The Archdeacon* (1877), and in early 1877, following the birth of his son Yury, Repin felt himself on the verge of a promising future. The artistic "gymnastics" he complained of in Paris were now over and he wrote to Stasov:

"I have become surprisingly calm since I suddenly hit upon an idea for myself; it is the subject for a picture with which I shall be occupied now for three years or so - it is worth a lot. But I will tell no one until I have finished the picture."³

Through different variations *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* (1883), one of Repin's most distinguished works, finally

emerged, and in hindsight the portraits from Chuguyev were regarded both as rehearsals for the larger work, and as auspicious portents of the quite exceptionally successful career which followed. *The Archdeacon* heralded almost two decades of illustrious mature paintings, each one further consolidating the artist's reputation as the leading realist painter of his generation. Each new work was eagerly anticipated, becoming on exhibition the subject of intellectual and public debate, praise and vilification, heated, bipartisan press pronouncements, or plain fashionable curiosity. Invariably, succeeding canvases notched up another record sale price and were viewed by increasingly large numbers of admirers, detractors or the simply curious.

During the mid 1890s Repin suffered an artistic crisis of conscience and began to doubt the worth of a career spent promulgating the Peredvizhnik credo of accessible, legible, ethical art, after which, with the possible exception of *The Formal Session of the State Council in Honour of Its Centenary* (1903), he painted no more works of major significance. The period between the late 1870s-early 1890s was however a hey-day for the artist, during which he produced a virtual who's who of contemporary portraits, chronicling Russia's intellectual, cultural and social élite, as well as his most outstanding paintings: *The Archdeacon* (1878), *Tsarevna Sofya* (1878-1879), *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* (1880-1883), *A Secret Meeting* (1883), *They Did Not Expect Him* (1884; 1888), *Spurning Confession* (1879-1885), *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan* (1885), *The Zaporozhye Cossacks Writing a Mocking Letter to the Turkish Sultan* (1880-1891) and *Arrest of a Propagandist* (1880-1892).

This period, combining radical dissension, fashionable portraiture and Imperial commissions, saw many changes in Repin's artistic and personal life. In September 1877 he moved _____ to Moscow for the next five years. During this period links with Mamontov and the Abramtsevo circle of artists were strengthened by terms of residence on the estate during the winter of 1877-1878 and the summer of 1879. In February of 1878 Repin took the important decision to cut his links with the Academy and join the Peredvizhniki. In September of 1882 he returned to St. Petersburg and made a major tour of Europe with Stasov

the following year. He also became acquainted with Tolstoy, visiting Yasnaya Polyana in 1887 and 1891.

In April 1890 Repin was elected as a member of a Government Commission to establish reforms for the Imperial Academy and in the following year resigned from the Peredvizhniki after a group of young artists, headed by Sergei Ivanov, unsuccessfully petitioned against the Society's restrictions on membership. The Peredvizhniki replied by hardening the regulations, reverting control of the Executive Board to the hands of the original members, which excluded Repin. Shortly afterwards, in 1892, Repin purchased his own estate at Zdravnevo near Vitebsk, and in September of 1894 he accepted a teaching post at the newly reformed Imperial Academy. It appeared by the early 1890s that his career had turned around completely, from peasant student and budding radical, to member of the landed classes, a property-owning cornerstone of the new Academy.

This period of Repin's career is however full of apparent contradictions. At the same time he took up his duties at the Academy he began a brief liaison with Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva* group and became a vociferous proponent of pure art, unfettered by tendentiousness or even plain narrative. Between May 1894 and July 1899 he broke off correspondence with Stasov and although his decampment to the reformed Academy was the initial cause of the rift, his art for art's sake proclamations completed the schism.

The following chapters, dealing thematically with Repin's mature output, cover, at different periods, all of the above events, necessitating movements back and forth in time, often ignoring paintings executed between times on unrelated themes. Such an approach has its merits and pitfalls but is not as potentially confusing as might first appear. Like most artists Repin's life-long habit was to keep several projects on the boil in case he got bogged down by any one of them,⁴ a practise which precludes attempts at a strictly chronological survey unless one jumps back and forth between canvases rather than times. A glance at the above list of major paintings will show that *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, *A Secret Meeting*, *They Did Not Expect Him*, *Spurning Confession*, *Ivan the Terrible*, and *Arrest of a Propagandist* were all worked upon, and with

the exception of the last canvas, completed, during the same time span which encompasses work on *The Cossacks*. Similarly, *Arrest of a Propagandist* was pursued on and off during the same years as all of the preceding pictures. An extreme case is the minor historical canvas *Minin's Call to Nizhni-Novgorod*, which was first sketched in 1876 and 'completed', that is to say work ceased on it, in 1915.

The thematical division of the major paintings therefore appears to be the most commendable method of seeking consistencies, or inconsistencies, of contextual ideology and aesthetic considerations within specific genres. It is hoped that the results of this approach will not only point up the strengths and weaknesses within each genre, but will yield observations which, in conclusion, can be applied more comprehensively to test for points of convergence or divergence in Repin's œuvre.

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The cultural trends which shaped the first generation of literarily-minded realist artists during the 1870s, eventually came to bear on this, the great vanguard of artistic individualism, though with delayed and uneven results. The contribution that art could make towards the solution of existing and evolving social problems was evident in the case of history painting then with its inferior status, the genre which had an established tradition of social commentary and conscience pin-pricking.

During the 1870s, however, history painting merged with genre to produce greater archaeological accuracy and consistency of period detail. Furniture, even wallpaper, depicted historical surroundings as individuals, often in domestic, anecdotal and un-heroic scenes. The best proponent of this contemporary brand of history was Vyacheslav Ivanov (1858-1901) whose works included *Scene from the Domestic Lives of the Russian Royal Family Playing Chess, Russian Museum, 1893*. The

CHAPTER 3

History Painting

History painting in Russia was, from the inception of the Academy under Catherine in 1764, staple fare. Its mixture of neoclassicism, melodrama, and theatricality found early expression in the work of Anton Losenko (1737-1773) and later its greatest exponents Karl Bryullov and Fyodor Bruni. For a long time however scenes from Russian history were notably absent, considered inappropriate for this, the pre-eminent of genres, traditionally a vehicle for antique grandeur and moral exemplars.

When in the second half of the 18th century native subjects began to appear, the indigenous element was confined to the titles alone. Losenko's *Vladimir and Rogneda* (Russian Museum, 1770), I. Akimov's *The Return of Svyatoslav from the Danube* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1773), and G. Ugryumov's *Yan Usmar's Feat of Strength* (Russian Museum, 1796-1797), are examples all of which cloaked Russian history in a swathe of classical drapery, columns, capitals and grandiloquent gesturing, with little or no concession made towards archaeological accuracy,¹ nor any attempt at personalisation; the figures merely acting as moral ciphers.

The cultural trends which shaped the first generation of liberally-minded realist artists during the 1860s, eventually came to bear on this, the most venerated of artistic hierarchies, though with somewhat slower results. The contribution that art could make towards the solution of existing and evolving social problems was less evident in the case of history painting than with its inferior sister, the genre class, which had an established tradition of social commentary and conscience pin-pricking.

During the 1860s, however, history painting merged with genre to produce greater archaeological accuracy and consistency of period dress, furniture, even coiffure, depicting historical personages as individuals, often in domestic, anecdotal and un-heroic scenes. The best proponent of this documentary brand of history was Vyacheslav Shvarts (1838-1869) whose works included *Scenes from the Domestic Lives of the Russian Tsars: Playing Chess*, (Russian Museum, 1865), *The*

Patriarch Nikon at the New Jerusalem Monastery (1867), and *The Vernal Train of the Tsarina on a Pilgrimage at the time of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1868). Other exponents, in more dramatic vein, included Nikolai Shustov, who painted *Ivan III Tearing up the Khan's Decree* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1862) and Pavel Chistyakov, one of Repin's academic tutors, whose works included *Sofya Vitovtovna* (Russian Museum, 1861). Konstantin Flavitsky, though more famed for his large academic painting *Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum* (Russian Museum, 1862) also produced the luridly sensuous *Princess Tarakanova in the Petropavlosk Fortress at the Time of the Flood* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1864).²

Whilst accurately reproducing the mien and manners of their respective periods, artists made little attempt to capture the psychological drama of the participants, far less to draw critical comparisons with the present. History painting was slow to don the critical mantle but in 1871 the first Peredvizhnik exhibition saw the revelation of Ge's *Peter the Great Interrogating Tsarevich Alexei at Peterhof* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1871) and Antokolsky's *Tsar Ivan the Terrible* (Russian Museum, 1871). Both Antokolsky's powerfully brooding figure of the seated Ivan and Ge's masterful study of Peter, the human dynamo, brooking no obstacles to his reformation of Russia, are history in introspection, reflected through the psychologies of its prime movers, rather than in the depiction of momentous events. The writer Saltykov-Shchedrin further interpreted Ge's painting as a comment on the unfinished reforms of the 1860s which, like the confrontation between Peter and Alexei, were being jeopardized by obstructive, uncomprehending traditionalism.³ Though often the underlying critical sentiments of historical paintings could be more in the eye of the beholder, it soon became an established practise and the source of much tenuous criticism to look for latent messages in historical canvases.⁴

History painting was not universally welcomed by the Peredvizhniki, though examples appeared regularly in their annual exhibitions. Stasov consistently opposed what he saw as a dilution of the original ethos of the Peredvizhniki, believing that the observable present, rather than some imagined past, took artistic precedence, and that critical

comments were best made directly, rather than analogously. To an extent his position was vindicated since, eventually, the enormous public success of the painters Viktor Vasnetsov (1848-1926) and Vasily Surikov (1848-1916) eroded the nitty-gritty realism which had been the Society's hallmark. Kramskoy shared some of Stasov's reservations but defended Repin's historical works. He felt that relevance of subject matter was the key, insisting that such paintings should stimulate debate through their analogy with the present.⁵

In reality, however, this sort of work was rare. During the reign of Alexander III the mood of nationalism, which had always been a strong social undercurrent, broke out with renewed and bellicose vigour, partly by desire, but also by policy, fuelled by political events such as the move (crusade might be a better word) to liberate the Balkan Slavs. Alexander was keen to promote a native, religious and Slavic-inspired art form, to russify the art scene in line with the political life of the country. In doing so he favoured the robust realism of the Peredvizhniki and during his reign set about enticing its best exponents back to the Academy. The Slavic revival of the 1880s-1890s saw the wholesale exploitation of Old Russian art forms, and in painting the splendour and turbulence of Russia's historical past became interwoven with mythological scenes, swamping critical analogies. Viktor Vasnetsov, whose passion for mediaeval Russia was fuelled by studies at Abramtsevo, foresook his earlier genre paintings in favour of large, decorative scenes from Russia's distant, semi-mythical past, such as *After Prince Igor's Battle with the Polovtsy* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1880) and *The Bogatyrs* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1898). Although Soviet commentators have been at pains to stress the nationalism and patriotism of these works,⁶ Vasnetsov also made many forays into the realms of pure fantasy: *The Magic Carpet* (Museum of Fine Arts, Gorky, 1880) and *Snow White* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1899), are far removed from the founding aims of the Peredvizhniki.⁷

Vasily Surikov focused more closely on the political and social upheavals of the Petrine period and devoted himself to vast, densely populated reconstructions, becoming without doubt Russia's foremost history painter. His works are more concerned with chronicling the movements of a nation than with psychological portrayals of

individuals, utilising the Russian people as his subject matter. His power-brokers are pushed to the side-lines, as in *The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsy* (1881, Ill.22), or completely omitted, as in *The Boyarina Morozova* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1887). Surikov was also more visibly concerned with colour and light, working in a more painterly style than that of his contemporaries, a fact which endeared him to later, more aesthetically-minded artists.⁸ He was also distinctly apolitical, though his paintings, with their strong sympathies for the plight of the Old Russia, pushed aside so comprehensively by Peter's reforms, were regarded as expressions of a conservative temperament. Stasov was decidedly cool towards Surikov's paintings and somehow contrived not to notice the enormous *Execution of the Streltsy* at the 9th Peredvizhnik exhibition in 1881.⁹

The paintings of Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942) are even further removed from the original breed of Peredvizhnik realism. A pupil of Perov's at the Moscow Art School, Nesterov experienced a spiritual crisis during the mid 1880s and turned to the depiction of mediaeval hermits and saints, mingling history with spirituality in such paintings as *The Youth of St. Sergius* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1892-1897) and *The Vision of St. Dmitry, Tsarevich* (Russian Museum, 1899), depicting the canonized son of Ivan IV, supposedly murdered on the instruction of Boris Gudonov.¹⁰ Nesterov's paintings, brightly coloured and simply composed, using flat, decorative designs, seem the epitome of spiritual idealism, yet whilst their inclusion did not go unchallenged, these and similarly ethereal paintings appeared regularly at Peredvizhnik exhibitions.¹¹

Though the historical genre continued to flourish at the Academy (its greatest adherent was Repin's student colleague Heinrich Semiradsky), for realist artists the treatment of such themes carried possibilities beyond antique grandeur. In the same way that the Academy cloaked nudity and sensuality in the guise of classicism,¹² so history painting offered a chance to voice delicate or unacceptable criticisms by association with past events. But a preoccupation with history, to the detriment of contemporary concerns, could compromise an artist's credibility and standing within reformist intellectual circles. In Repin's case, an artist whom Stasov had taken considerable

trouble to shape after his own image (to the point of misrepresentation), it was crucial to ensure that his creative powers were not enervated by encounters with irrelevant and unobserved phenomena.

It is perhaps surprising that outside of Russia Repin's reputation as an artist has often rested on his history paintings,¹³ since his major works in this genre total only three: *Tsarevna Sofya in the New Maiden Convent at the Time of the Execution of the Streltsy and the Torture of All Her Servants in 1698* (1879, Ill.23), *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan. 16 November 1581* (1885, Ill.24), and *The Zaporozhye Cossacks Writing a Mocking Letter to the Turkish Sultan* (1880-1891, Ill.27).¹⁴

In Paris, distanced from the constraints of Bruni's dictate, that an artist should be a classicising poet,¹⁵ it is significant that Repin studiously avoided historical or classical themes, preferring instead contemporary, every-day subjects and portraits. Even his sole official commission, *Sadko*, was drawn from fantasy rather than fact. Disputing with Kramskoy over the pros and cons of *A Parisian Café* he ruled out a retreat from modern concerns stating that he had "no love for history."¹⁶ He had completed one historical canvas at this time, the suitably Russian *Stenka Razin* (1874), which for many years was thought lost.¹⁷ It shows a couple being rowed in a barge, against a background of rocky cliffs, the faces small and indistinct. Repin did not think the picture worthy of a single mention in his correspondence and it seems likely that the painting was worked-up in Paris from some of his Volga sketches, *Stenka Razin* being a title he later gave to a painting called *Down the Volga* (*Вниз по Волге*).¹⁸ If so the interchangeability of titles would tend to confirm the inconsequential nature of the painting.

Tsarevna Sofya in the New Maiden Convent at the Time of the Execution of the Streltsy and the Torture of All Her Servants in 1698 (1879)

The period during which Repin worked on *Tsarevna Sofya* was particularly fruitful. Bad feelings between himself and Stasov over his Parisian paintings were resolved and the series of peasant

paintings, done whilst in Chuguyev in 1877, were well received, especially *The Archdeacon* (Ill. 39), upon which Stasov lavished some of his most opulent praise. In early 1878 Stasov and Kramskoy were elated when Repin formally joined the Peredvizhniki. His petition¹⁹ was naturally accepted, and he communicated his joy to Stasov:

"You can congratulate me on a new honour — I am now a member of the Society for Travelling Exhibitions. The six-year scholarship from the Academy has ended, its chains have fallen away from me and I have finally achieved what I have wanted for a long time."²⁰

It seemed to Stasov that his artistic ambitions for Repin were coming to fruition, but his delight was to be short lived as Repin took up work on *Tsarevna Sofya*, a canvas which became another major bone of artistic contention.

By now Repin was living in Moscow, having moved there in September of 1877, but was experiencing mixed emotions. He was initially struck by mediaeval architecture, native charm and picturesque qualities, and eulogised the city.²¹ He was, however, becoming the subject of increasing enmity from some of the Muscovite artists, Illarion Pryanishnikov and Vladimir Makovsky especially, as a consequence of which he tended to remain within a close circle of friends from St. Petersburg, chiefly Polenov and Vasnetsov. Repin complained of the tedious back-biting within the claustrophobic art world: "The Muscovites are beginning to attack me again. They are disgusting fools, bigots, bungling blockheads!!"²²

It was perhaps with this in mind that he had engineered a partial retreat to the more conducive atmosphere of Abramtsevo during the previous winter, in the company of Polenov and Vasnetsov. Here, on Mamontov's estate, all three were involved in a number of neo-Russian architectural projects. Some, like the wooden, fairy-tale peasant izba, which served as a play house for Mamontov's children, were conceived in fun, others, like the small Church of the Saviour, based on a 14th century Novgorodian design, were more ambitious undertakings, but all drew the artists closer to old Muscovy, and in the case of Vasnetsov, who later completed a cycle of four mythological paintings for Mamontov, including *Prince Igor's Battle with the Polovtsy*, it was to

change the course of his work.²³

A general fascination with Moscow (Repin, Vasnetsov and Polenov combed its historical monuments and explored its environs),²⁴ combined with the historical-revivalist atmosphere at Abramtsevo, were factors in suggesting a native historical theme. Repin first mentions the subject in December of 1877, whilst sketching in the Novodevichy Monastery,²⁵ and early next year listed his works in progress, including *Tsarevna Sofya in the Novodevichy Monastery*.²⁶

Stasov was unenthusiastic about Repin's choice of subject²⁷ but the artist ploughed on, working relentlessly to the virtual exclusion of all else, planning the painting around tangible aspects, an approach which, as with work on *Sadko*, Stasov was more happy to indulge. He made extensive use of period documentation, familiarised himself with the historical locations, studied the costumes and accessories of the period, immersed himself in its literature and scoured museums.²⁸ For the figure of Sofya he made use of both contemporary portraits and living models. The writer Yelena Blaramburg, who arrived at Abramtsevo in 1878 with Turgenev,²⁹ posed for some of the sketches, as did Valentina Serova, the composer, and mother of Valentin Serov, to whom Repin had been giving drawing lessons since 1874.³⁰

Work went well and late in the year he wrote to Stasov: "I have done everything I wanted, almost as I imagined".³¹ He also wrote to Chistyakov, telling him that he would enter the painting for the forthcoming Peredvizhnik exhibition, and asking him to send news of how it was received.³²

The finished painting depicts Sofya Alexeyevna Romanova (1657-1704), half-sister to Peter the Great, who, when he came of age and ascended the throne, was forced into the Novodevichy convent. Repin paints her, incarcerated in the Monastery, on the anniversary of her unsuccessful attempt to incite the Streltsy to rebellion, at which time the gruesome events so graphically described by the painting's title are taking place.

The preliminary sketches of robust and resolute female sitters hardly prepare one for the completed image of Sofya, a monumental figure charged with suppressed fury and seething with hatred. Her stance and glare, creating a visual affront to the spectator, seem

designed to unsettle if not shock, and from its first showing to the present day it remains a work both praised and reviled but rarely ignored. Certainly Repin could not be accused of the objective rationalism which marked the archaeological correctness of Shvarts' paintings, nor the romantic flights of fancy that permeated Vasnetsov's scenes of Old Russia. Although crammed with emotion, to the point of rupture, Repin's first historical canvas is dominated entirely by the solid, corporeal figure of Sofya.

The painting was a great surprise for many, a seeming retreat from his present day subjects, and accordingly judgments on it were conflicting. Stasov however, confirmed in his opinion that Repin had embarked on a disasterously misguided course, set out his misgiving at length, in more than one article.³³

His main thrust was that Repin was venturing into a completely new field, and the result, he felt, was "an utterly original painting executed with talent, but unsatisfying". He added: "He is not a dramatist, he is not a historian, and I profoundly believe that if he paints even 20 historical subjects they will succeed even less."³⁴

In Stasov's view Repin was wasting his proven strength, one which he shared with the playwright Ostrovsky, for the depiction and elucidation of things observed at first-hand, from everyday life. The invention required to depict other times and places was simply not an ability either shared, and once outside of their own worlds both slipped into "rhetoric, invention and contrivance."³⁵ Not having the artistic nature to depict Sofya, he maintained that Repin had been forced to rely on fabrication of pose, expression and look. Stasov asked, could Sofya listen to the moans and cries of her tortured servants and be capable only of leaning against a table and placidly folding her arms?³⁶

It might seem curious to latter-day audiences, less accustomed to the intense drama of many realist paintings, that in this, seemingly the most emotional of canvases, Stasov uses the adjective placid to describe the Tsarevna. In doing so he did not ignore Sofya's wild expression, but felt that it was incongruous with the the relaxed position of her arms, folded across her chest, and accordingly the result was theatrical and artificial. Pulling no punches for a close

friend, he fulminated:

"There never was such a woman! She and Peter I were like colossal, highly-strung, mighty steam-engines. Sofya would have thrown herself at the grating, and at her enemies, like an animal. Repin has not attempted this in her pose, far less in her expression."³⁷

Stasov did find time to praise the technical mastery of the work: Sofya's head, so strongly reminiscent of Peter, her silver Byzantine dress, especially the various details on her sleeves and chest, the recessed window, the ink-well, the multi-coloured manuscript on the table, painted: "as only a great and significant talent can."³⁸ But his chief criticism, one which he clung to throughout Repin's career, was that an artist could not and should not concern himself with matters outside the realm of his understanding. This view was one for which he greatly admired Proudhon and Courbet, the standard-bearers of French democratic, realist painting. Stasov's admonishment of Repin over *Tsarevna Sofya* could equally well have come from Courbet's own lips:

"...I say that art or talent to an artist can only be (in my opinion) the means of applying his personal faculties to the ideas and the objects of the time in which he lives.

Especially, art in painting can only consist of the representation of objects that are visible and tangible to the artist.

No age can be depicted except by the artists that have lived during it. I believe that the artists of one century are completely incompetent when it comes to depicting the objects of a preceding or future century, in other words, to paint either the past or the future.

It is in this sense that I deny the term historical art as applied to the past. Historical art is, by its very essence, contemporary."³⁹

In keeping with his review of *Sadko*, Stasov again modified his hostility and qualified his praise, counting as successful those parts of the painting anchored in reality: clothes, architecture, accessories, and even the family likeness of Sofya to Peter, which Stasov knew derived from contemporary portraits of the Tsarevna.⁴⁰ At

the same time he placed the blame for the over-all failure of the painting at the feet of Repin's realistic but unimaginative temperament.

That the painting was the subject of bad reviews was hardly surprising. The Peredvizhniki were still perceived as being in opposition to the Academy and their exhibitions always found detractors. But though he was well aware of Stasov's attitude towards historical painting Repin was taken off guard by the severity and highly public nature of the rebuke.⁴¹ In a superficially restrained letter he asked Stasov to set out a "detailed analysis" of why the picture had so displeased him, but he received no reply and there followed a lull of almost six months during which he and Stasov had no communication with each other.⁴² Despite an eventual reconciliation Stasov held firm to his views, repeating the criticisms wholesale four years later.⁴³

Kramskoy, though not keen on history painting *per se*, was a staunch ally. Impressed by the force of *Tsarevna Sofya* he wrote immediately after his first view of the work:

"I was greatly moved by your picture. After *Burlaki* this is your most important work. I'll go further, I think this painting is even better. *Sofya* conveys the impression of a tigress locked in an iron cage, something which fits her story completely."⁴⁴

Repin made little comment to Kramskoy about the critical furore *Tsarevna Sofya* caused but doubts did afflict him at this time, and though these were not committed to paper they must have been voiced, since Kramskoy's next letter reads like a verbal life-belt: "Hold fast! We are living through unpleasant times: virtually all of the critics are against you, but that is nothing. You are right (in my opinion)!"⁴⁵

Shortly afterwards Kramskoy heard Repin was considering re-painting *Tsarevna Sofya*. Alarmed, he begged him to consider the long-term importance of the painting, rather than the momentary critical storm.⁴⁶ This was just the fillip Repin needed and he replied in resilient mood, taking up Kramskoy's appeal to posterity:

"To me, personally, it is no news that virtually all the critics are against me. This has been repeated with each of my works. Do you remember the din caused by the appearance of *Burlaki*? The difference is that formerly Stasov was the exception and defended me. Now he also barks like an old dog. Well, what can one do. They will bark awhile, and cease. These are trifles in comparison with eternity."⁴⁷

Posterity seems however to have judged otherwise, eventually siding with Stasov. Though much play is made in Soviet publications about Repin's ambitions to dissect and examine the historical process, or his analogous connection of past and present as periods of serious political and social upheaval in the wake of major reforms,⁴⁸ the painting is most creditably tackled on the same two levels which Stasov addressed. Firstly, the exceptionally fine painting of the interior and its accessories, and secondly, though Stasov did not approve, the overwhelming emotional impact.

On the first there is no doubting that the richness of the interior materials caught in the play of candle light brought out some fine painting. An innate aestheticism is evident in the depiction of jewelry, the lambent silk dress, the candlestick and writing implements on the table, and especially the rich red and gold resonances of the icons, glowing like hot coals in the interior. However, all of this is not merely overshadowed by the figure of Sofya, but positively eclipsed by it. Her sheer bodily size coupled with the ferocity of her intransigent glare are, if neither subtle nor tasteful, certainly mesmerising. Repin's concern is clearly directed at a personal analysis, reflecting Petrine turbulence and intransigence through the depiction of a strong-willed, indomitable individual; a one-woman catalyst on historical events. His approach is not however partisan,⁴⁹ and the viewer might see the unflattering portrait of Sofya as intrinsically discourteous, possibly pointing to a loss of sanity, or conclude that the strong, recalcitrant figure is a positive image, attesting the artist's admiration. In this respect the painting lacks the polemic which Stasov saw as a *priority*, but whilst the aesthetic quality of the painting predominates over any ideological content, both pale before the oppressive, emotional input. The saving grace of this however is that the lurid cadaver hanging at

Sofya's window is easily overlooked.

Despite Kramskoy's approval, and that of Tretyakov, who purchased the portrait before thoughts of repainting were cold, the work was not the success Repin hoped for and he turned once more to contemporary Russian scenes. The following six years saw completion and exhibition of a series of memorable paintings: *Vechornitsy* (1881), *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* (1880-1883), *A Secret Meeting* (1883), *They Did Not Expect Him* (1884; re-painted 1888), and *Spurning Confession* (1879-1885), as well as many significant portraits. An historical portrait, *A Warrior of the 17th Century* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1879) was exhibited in the 11th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1883, along with *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, but despite the finely observed asiatic features and period costume, it was understandably overshadowed by a particularly good selection of pictures that year.⁵⁰

In the circumstances it might have been thought that Repin would heed Stasov's advice and confine himself to modern subject matter. But though between 1879 and 1885 he exhibited only *Tsarevna Sofya* and *A Warrior of the 17th Century*, his thoughts remained in historical realms, even when working on contemporary depictions of political and rural Russia. In 1885 he completed and exhibited an historical painting which, twice during his lifetime, became the subject of major controversy.

Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan. 16 November 1581 (1885)

The failure of *Tsarevna Sofya* prompted Repin's return to contemporary subjects but was, ironically, to provide the spark for his second large history painting. In 1881 he told Stasov that he intended to abandon "all these historical resurrections of the dead", and to start painting "directly from stirring reality."⁵¹ On lifting his head from nearly three years of antiquarian research and emotional integration into Petrine Moscow, Repin found that the present afforded no refuge from the horrors of political excesses.

In his contemporary canvases, such as *Spurning Confession* (started in 1879), *A Secret Meeting* (1883) and most notably with *They Did Not Expect Him* (1884; 1888), Repin charted the disintegrating populist

movement in Russia. *A Secret Meeting*, depicting a clandestine gathering of the People's Will organisation (Народная воля), a group of broadly populist revolutionaries whose manifesto included the sanctioning of necessary terrorist acts, was not even completed when the assassination of Alexander II on 1st March 1881, and the subsequent May-Day executions of its members, provided the stimulus for *Ivan the Terrible*.

Despite personal sensitivities Repin attended the public execution of some of the assassins, as he had the execution of Karakozov in 1866. Though his letters are surprisingly laconic in their references to the assassination,⁵² the current wave of violent reprisals was later recalled as a period of political trepidation: "These were indeed terrible times...absolute horror...I even remember the little plates each wore on their chests with the inscription, 'Regicide'."⁵³ With these thoughts in mind he pinned down the inception of *Ivan the Terrible*:

"The idea of painting the picture, a tragic episode in the life of Ivan IV, first came to me when I was in Moscow in 1882. I was returning from the Moscow exhibition, where I had been at a Rimsky-Korsakov concert. His musical trilogy - love, power and revenge - excited me terribly, and I very much wanted to paint something equal in impact to his music. My emotions were overwhelmed by the horrors of contemporary life. This mood was then a common one. Terrible scenes were in everybody's mind, but no one dared paint them...It was natural to look for a way out of this painful and tragic situation into history."⁵⁴

At a much later date Repin confirmed the link between *Ivan the Terrible* and the executions of the People's Will organization,⁵⁵ and though one is inclined to caution by the tardiness of the assertion, it does make this the only one of the artist's historical works where a positive association with current political events is professed rather than surmised.

As with *Tsarevna Sofya*, the major part of the work on *Ivan the Terrible*, between 1884-1885, was continuous. Repin appears to have been possessed by the painting, recalling frenzied bouts of activity, insomnia and ghastly visions. At times he put the work aside, even going to the lengths of covering it up to diffuse its hold over him.

He worked in isolation, confiding in nobody, until an audience was granted to some artist friends, including Kramskoy, Shishkin and Yaroshenko. The veil was lifted from the painting in atmospheric surroundings, amidst the glow of lamp-light, and produced a reverential silence amongst the visitors, who then spoke only in muted tones. The painting was then re-cloaked, but the spell retained its power over the subdued visitors.⁵⁶

Preliminary sketches show a composition surprisingly similar to the finished painting of 1885.⁵⁷ In succeeding studies the artist increased the emotional intensity, making the setting more claustrophobic, concentrating on the figures of Ivan and his dying son. In early sketches the steel-tipped staff, the murder weapon, is still in the Tsar's hands, but eventually Repin relied merely on the suggestion of the preceding violence, leaving the staff to rest innocuously at the foot of the canvas.⁵⁸

In selecting this theme Repin was running the risk of artistic cliché, so his coupling of heightened emotion with a lack of observable violence, seems calculatedly unconventional. The 'colourful' excesses of Ivan IV meant that scenes from the Tsar's life were popular, perhaps too much so. In his short story *Artists*, the writer Vsevolod Garshin has his disgruntled social-realist painter Ryabinin speculate as to whether his passionate denunciation of working class hardships, a picture of a deaf boiler-maker condemned to a life of back-breaking toil, will stir the consciences of the affluent gallery-goers, only to conclude:

"Not likely! The picture has been finished and put in a gilt frame, and two attendants will bear it off to the exhibition at the academy on their heads. And now there it stands, among the *Noons* and *Sunsets*, next to a *Girl with a Cat*, not far from a seven-yard long *Ivan the Terrible piercing the foot of Vaska Shibanov with his staff*."⁵⁹

In summoning up the most hackneyed academic image, Garshin points to the possibilities that Ivan IV suggested for historical drama. Ivan's wooden staff, tipped with a steel point, with which he transfixed the unfortunate Shibanov, was an obvious gift to an artist in pursuit of sensation. Repin nevertheless avoided the most obvious

and violent composition, relying instead on the mutely discarded staff to suggest the preceding action. Instead of the violence of anger, when Ivan, in a fit of rage, struck his son a fatal blow, Repin depicts the equally terrifying violence of remorse, as the delirious Tsar cradles the body of the doomed Ivan. In this manner the painting is not less sensational, merely less conventional.

Repin pared down the content of his picture to its two protagonists, leaving the accessories to act as props, rather than as intrusive, decorative strivings after historical accuracy. The ornate interior, shown bright and colourful in a sketch of 1883,⁶⁰ darkened to assume the claustrophobic menace of the final version. In the search for models Repin chose for Ivan an amalgamation from portraits of the artist Grigory Myasoyedov and the writer P. Blaramburg (husband of one of the models for *Tsarevna Sofya*), and for the murdered Tsarevich portraits of the artist Vladimir Menck and, ironically, the writer Garshin, whom Repin much admired.⁶¹

The final artistic touch was to select a suitably uncontroversial title for this emotional *tour de force*, one which would avoid censorship. The original title, *Filicide* (*Сыноубийца*), was wisely rejected in favour of the dispassionate *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan*, to which the date, 16 November 1581, was added when the exhibition reached Moscow.⁶²

The much abused term 'sensational' can readily and accurately be applied to the effect wrought by the picture when the 13th Peredvizhnik exhibition opened in St. Petersburg in 1885. In addition to a number of apocryphal fainting women the painting engendered every form of reaction, from vitriolic denunciation and wild praise, evoking such mass curiosity that the police had to intervene to keep public order.⁶³

Positive reactions came from those closest to the artist. Tolstoy took a typically philosophical view and was heartened by what he saw as an exposé of how violence harms the perpetrator as much as the victim, a view he had proffered when appealing unsuccessfully to Alexander III to spare the lives of his father's murderers.⁶⁴ He wrote to Repin:

"I could say a lot to you in words but I don't want to philosophise in a letter. We used to have a haemorrhoidal, half-witted old woman dependant living with us, and you know the Karamazov father - your Ivan is for me a combination of Karamazov and this old dependant, and he is just the very ugly and pathetic murderer that people like that must be; and the true beauty in death of his son - it's good, very good; and the artist wanted to say something important and said it fully and clearly, and, moreover, so skilfully that the skill doesn't show. Goodbye, and may God help you to penetrate deeper and deeper still."⁶⁵

Favourable comments were also forthcoming from Adrian Prakhov,⁶⁶ and the writer Alexei Suvorin gave the picture a flattering review, likening Repin to Rembrandt and praising his masterful psychological delineation of the two Ivans, declaring the work a huge success for Russian art in general.⁶⁷ Suvorin's article was prompted by a long description of the painting sent to him by Kramskoy, in a letter which provides fascinating insight into the intensity with which works of art were then regarded, a fact often overlooked by modern writers, who, in their detached, objective analyses, risk losing the essence of the times. Though at worst the passionately emotional responses engendered by these canvases could be the outpourings of romantic or sentimental temperaments, the practice on both sides of the critical divide was to give oneself up entirely to the painting and to enter whole-heartedly into the emotional catharsis it invoked: nothing was done by half measures and the ecstatic tone of Kramskoy's praise, which is worth quoting at length, was as intensely echoed by conservative detractors:

"What is conveyed and brought most sharply to the fore is the unexpectedness of the murder! This most phenomenal, and extremely difficult aspect, is achieved by means of only two figures. The father has struck his own son on the temple with his staff, and here the son has collapsed, pouring out his life's blood! A moment, and then the father cries out in horror, rushes to his son and seizes him. Dropping to the floor he lifts him on to his lap, and firmly, firmly, presses with one hand the wound at the temple (but the blood gushes out between the slits of his fingers), and with his other hand round his waist, clasps him to his breast and firmly, firmly, kisses the head of his poor (and unusually attractive) son, and he roars, (positively roars) from horror, in his helpless condition. Throwing himself upon his son, tearing at his hair, the father has stained the upper half of his face with blood; a touch of Shakespearian tragicomedy. This animal of a father, shouting with horror, and this sweet,

precious son, resigned to his death, that eye, and that wonderfully attractive mouth, his heavy breathing and those helpless hands! Oh, my God, if only one could quickly, quickly help!! What does it matter that on the floor there is already a whole pool of blood at the place where the son's temple hit the ground; whose concern is it that there there will be another basin-full: this is the usual thing! A mortally wounded man loses a great deal of blood of course, but this does not affect his nerves. But how it is painted, God how it is painted! Can you really imagine a pool of blood going unnoticed and not affecting you, because in the painting there is this terrible, sensational expressiveness of the father's grief and his loud scream? And in his hands is his son, his son whom he has killed, and he... already he cannot control the pupil of his eye, he breathes heavily, feeling his father's grief, his horror, his cry, his tears, and he, like a child, wants to smile at him, to say: 'It doesn't matter father, don't be afraid!' Ah, my God! You simply must see it!!!!"⁶⁸

Kramskoy's praise was not however echoed by Stasov, who stuck to his belief that historical scenes were beyond Repin's capabilities. With unusual tact he avoided reviewing the Peredvizhnik exhibition that year, but when conservative critics launched a concerted attack on the painting, and Iseev, formerly Repin's protector, felt obliged by his position within the Academy to join the chorus of disapproval,⁶⁹ Stasov could not resist entering the fray. Problems with the painting had been foreseen and Tretyakov, who feared it would be banned from display, advised the artist to appeal directly to the Academy's president Grand Duke Vladimir to ensure its exhibition, a suggestion Repin did not act upon.⁷⁰

In the event the Grand Duke had already been apprised of the painting's content and underlying ethos by K.P. Pobedonostsev, Chief-Procurator of the Holy Synod, an influential advisor to the Tsar, and a man of legendary conservatism. When the Peredvizhnik exhibition moved to Moscow, the scene of Ivan's crime, the painting was removed from exhibition and Tretyakov was forbidden to exhibit it elsewhere.⁷¹ Though Alexander did visit the exhibition (curiosity clearly got the better of him), his judgment was by then much of a formality, since Pobedonostsev had reported his findings some months earlier:

"Today I saw that painting and was unable to look at it without disgust...the art of today is remarkable: without the slightest ideals, only the sense of naked realism, critical tendentiousness

and denunciations. Previous paintings by Repin were distinguished by this inclination and were offensive. It is hard to understand what thought induced the artist to describe in such total realism these particular moments. And why Ivan Grozny? Besides tendentiousness of a determined kind, you will not find another motive."⁷²

This official disapproval, coupled with the picture's removal from exhibition,⁷³ greatly enhanced Repin's reputation in the eyes of radical and liberal commentators, and has since stood him well in many a Soviet monograph. Reactionary protests were raised and a campaign mounted to discredit both the painting and its author. These ranged from straight-forward bluster, to learned deconstructions, to blatant yellow journalism. A writer for the paper *Minuta* for instance revealed that the picture was the brain-child of one of Repin's students, a charge quickly retracted when the artist threatened litigation.⁷⁴

An article in the Academy's journal sought to prove that the picture could not even be considered as a work of art. Professor F.P. Landtsert devoted a long and erudite lecture to the painting, which was subsequently published, concentrating solely on its anatomical and medical inaccuracies.⁷⁵ In replying to Landtsert's desperate criticisms Stasov had to be wary of an open attack upon the Academy since its president, the Grand Duke, was after all the brother of the Tsar, and in turn *Ivan the Terrible* was arraigned on a charge of *lèse majesté*, depicting as it did the Tsar as a common murderer. And all this coming so soon after Alexander II's assassination and the ensuing epidemic of mass public executions. Stasov's written rebuke⁷⁶ was therefore aimed solidly at the unfortunate anatomist. However, the insinuation that Landtsert's views could not be divorced from those of the Academy, did not go unnoticed, and so stung by the criticism was Grand Duke Vladimir that he instigated direct government intervention. *Novosti* received a strict warning over Stasov's article and press outlets were warned upon pain of severe punishment from publishing criticisms of the Academy or its "most august leader".⁷⁷

On 15 May 1885 the Grand Duke wrote to I.N. Durnovo, Minister of the Interior, singling out Stasov's article as beyond toleration. His concern was, ostensibly, for the injurious effects such irreverence might have on the young and expressly identified Stasov and Repin as

perpetrators of, "tendency in art...full of expressions of impermissible protest against all forms of establishment."⁷⁸ His request that the Minister impose a penalty on the editor of *Novosti* was carried out and the paper warned that further approving opinions on Repin's painting would receive "a deserved punishment."⁷⁹ The Minister, concerned that articles of this sort might simply be transferred to other organs, went even further, taking it upon himself to make the ban comprehensive. Accordingly he notified all journals that insinuations or open attacks on the Imperial Academy of Arts would again "result in a fitting punishment."⁸⁰

A demand that *Novosti* reprimand Stasov went unheeded, but the authorities showed themselves not only to be extremely sensitive towards any criticism, implied or openly expressed, but also willing to invoke their not inconsiderable powers to suppress any favourable reaction to the painting.

It should be remembered that at this juncture Repin was already the doyen of radical circles, thanks chiefly to the success of his revolutionary canvas *They Did Not Expect Him* and that, in the public eye at least, he was certainly regarded as the *enfant terrible* of Russian art. But even today it is not difficult to see how shocking the painting must have been to an audience in the 1880s, whether through its political analogy or by its sheer emotional impact.

In the Soviet Union the painting has been invariably invoked as an example of political castigation through historical analogy, but succeeding generations of western critics have concentrated on its emotional impact. A good example is the view of Rosa Newmarch, who was personally associated with Repin and who, though she thought the painting showed "masterly psychological insight" believed Repin had overstepped the bounds of good taste, concluding: "...All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten our memories of this incarnation..."⁸¹ Certainly Repin's artistic restraint can be called into question, though the power of the work renders comparisons with other depictions of Ivan somewhat incompatible.

Shvarts's treatment of the same theme, painted twenty years earlier, *Ivan the Terrible beside the Body of His Son* (1864, Ill. 25), lacks the sparseness and drama of Repin's painting. The ornate

furnishings and florid decoration, the monstrously large decorative candlesticks, and the ecclesiastical accessories of the attendant priests, all detract from the preceding crime. The Tsarevich, laid out in peaceful repose, has been cleaned and dressed, giving no hint of a violent death, and the emotional response of Ivan, who stares impassively beyond the spectator, is confined to a convulsive clutching with one hand at his son's coverings. The picture space is confined, with no less than six figures pressed close to its edges.

By comparison Repin's repressive sense of constriction is achieved by the ingress of darkness, filling the room like some black noxious gas, by which, as Kramskoy pointed out, the artist has forcefully evoked the drama by means of only two figures. Though the painting includes many decorative details, the Tsarevich's silk gown, the beautifully woven carpet, the red and black diamond-patterned wall tiles, and a mediaeval tiled stove, all are barely perceptible in the dark background and are diminished by the force of the violent drama. In the atmospheric stage-lighting which picks out the two figures, only the weft of the carpet, Ivan's steel-tipped staff, and the overturned chair with its decorative bolster are of visible consequence.

Other depictions of Ivan include Antokolsky's statue of 1871, an ambivalent portrayal resembling a mediaeval version of Rodin's *Thinker*, which serves to remind us that Ivan's legacy of competent administration and barbaric excesses has historically provoked mixed assessments. Vasnetsov's much later work, *Tsar Ivan the Terrible* (1897, Ill. 26) makes even greater use of decorative surfaces, even to the point of encrusting the wooden staff with a wealth of enamelled design and jewelry. The solitary figure bears a comically perturbed frown bereft of menace and the abiding impression is of an elaborately ornamented two-dimensional surface.

The unrestrained emotion of Repin's canvas is virtually unique in Russian art, bringing the scene to the limit of good taste without transgressing that line. This, of course, was and is a matter of opinion, especially if one accepts Pobedonostsev's view that Repin need never have taken on the subject. But having allowed the choice of subject Repin takes it to a logical if not obvious conclusion. Could

one depict the terrible consequences of Ivan's violence and the reality of the brutal murder of one's own son with restraint? Though the notoriety of the work has resulted in accusations of artistic excess there are plenty of examples of suspect taste which outstrip this. Perov's *The Torture of Boyarina Morozova* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1881) a variation on Surikov's more famous painting, depicting a trussed-up, up-turned, bare-breasted beauty being strung up in readiness for a beating, is particularly distasteful,⁸² as is F.A. Bronnikov's *Campo Scellerato* (*The Evil Field*). *Place of Execution in Ancient Rome. Crucified Slaves* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1879).⁸³ In European art possibly only Regnault's *Execution without Trial Under the Moorish Kings of Granada*, "a symphony in red",⁸⁴ can compare for shock value, though even here the subject seems entirely arbitrary, the violence unnecessary, and the painting entirely lacking in pathos: a case of bare sensationalism.

Repin was not however immune from melodrama. When in 1880 Surikov had almost completed his *The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsy*, a painting which evokes mass suffering without actually portraying Peter I's fiendish tortures and executions, Repin visited the artist's studio and ingenuously asked where the executions were. Against his better judgment Surikov adopted Repin's advice to include some hanged figures, such as he had painted suspended outside Tsarevna Sofya's window. These, when completed, caused the collapse of Surikov's grandmother! Tretyakov, who arrived the same day that the hanged men were completed, asked why on earth he wished to ruin the picture?⁸⁵ Repin's penchant for the lurid was eventually rejected and Surikov later confided that he considered the hanged men superfluous and cheap, remarking drolly about his grandmother's faint: "I thought then that I was right, and not Repin: art need not work this way..."⁸⁶

It might be thought that aesthetic considerations would be totally subsumed by the relentless drama, but it is to the credit of some observers that the artist's obvious involvement with these aspects has not gone unnoticed.⁸⁷ The two figures form a touching arabesque of interlocking forms, snaking downwards from Ivan's blood-stained hand, up through his head and arm and down through the Tsarevich's body and crumpled, helpless legs. The four boney fingers of the Tsarevich,

clutching at Ivan's arm in a gentle, reassuring gesture, are finely contrasted with the slim, long, mannerist fingers of the Tsar, from which the thickly impasted blood flows, and the varicose-veined right hand of the father, tautly supporting the weight of his son.

The carpet, rucked into woven waves of geometric colour, is painted broadly, in muted tones, forming a decorative respite from the central drama. In particular the young Ivan's delicate clothing, the roseate silk gown, the gold and green decorated boots, and some pearls just visible under his collar, echoing the single tear which runs from the impotent eye, all attest to the concerns of composition and colouring which work independently of the frenzied action, willing the spectator to notice something more than the narrative. Benois, as committed an aesthete as he was an opponent of Peredvizhnik sensationalism, was commendably receptive:

"The true subject is not history. He raises pathos to the degree of genuine horror but the dominating elements are colour and painting; it is executed with fire, a mastery of brush and colour, not found in other works."⁸⁸

As a progression from *Tsarevna Sofya*, *Ivan the Terrible* works with more success on all levels. The ideological content, which managed to be both universally humane and immediately topical, was professed by the artist, and acknowledged by contemporaries, whilst the aestheticism, subdued in *Tsarevna Sofya*, is here overtly to the fore. The rich orchestration of colour and texture which the artist employed in this picture, while it contributes to the evocation of the historical setting, serves principally to throw into relief, by its beauty, the pathos and horror of the figurative action. The much-vaunted political overtone, the painting's contemporary analogy, though it upset the Tsar (or more correctly Pobedonostsev) and affronted the dignity of the Academy's president, Grand Duke Vladimir, ultimately was not its enduring facet.⁸⁹ As with *Tsarevna Sofya* the intense emotional content, raised to a much shriller pitch in *Ivan the Terrible*, superseded all other considerations, and it was on these terms that the painting was judged.

Though Kramskoy paid handsome tribute to the artistic skill with

which the effect was wrought, both he and Tolstoy sought an emotional symbiosis between themselves and the work of art. Tolstoy speaks of the "true beauty in death" of the Tsarevich,²⁰ whilst Kramskoy was moved by the unnecessary, accidental nature of the killing, and in particular the depiction of Ivan's "poor (and unusually attractive) son..."²¹ Repin himself based the Tsarevich's portrait on studies of Garshin, a man whose saintliness he revered.²² Nowhere was a voice raised to protest that the historical Tsarevich was a worthy protégé of his father who participated in many of the Tsar's most brutal and debauched acts with what might modestly be called relish. In this respect most commentators have been willing to suspend their historical knowledge and accept the painting on a broad, moral level, participating in Repin's manifestly humanitarian portrayal of Ivan as victim of his own violence, at once terrifying and pathetic.

***The Zaporozhye Cossacks Writing a Mocking Letter to the Turkish Sultan*
(1880-1891)**

Repin's last major historical work was a radical departure from his previous attempts at the genre. In place of royal subjects, gloomy interiors and psychological portrayals of a few individuals, *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* is an outdoor, multi-figured and complex composition taken from a minor incident in Russian history, composed of relatively anonymous persons. Work on the painting covered a period of great artistic, social and political change. Conceived as early as 1878 and worked on through the height of Peredvizhnik prominence in the arts, it was not finished and exhibited until 1891, after Repin had resigned from the Society, and at a time when the realist school was coming under increasing pressure from new, aesthetically based artistic trends.

It was not unnatural for Repin to be drawn to a Cossack subject: he was of Ukrainian Cossack descent and had utilised the villages and peoples of Chuguyev and its surroundings in many of his works. The specific idea for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* came however during a winter stay at Abramtsevo, when the artist came upon a letter written by the 17th century Cossack leader Ataman Ivan Serko. It related to an event in 1676 when the Zaporozhye sech (the name denotes a Cossack

settlement beyond or below rapids) met and repelled the forces of Sultan Mohammed IV, reportedly inflicting casualties of 15,000. In reply to the Sultan's threat that he would attack with greater ferocity if the sech did not subjugate itself to his rule, the Cossacks composed a scornful reply. The letter Repin saw may not have been genuine nor contemporary,⁹³ but its content, full of crude and caustic humour, was inspirational. The first sketch for the painting (1878, Ill. 28)⁹⁴ depicting a circular group of figures around a table, at which their scribe pens the letter, bears the compositional imprint of the finished work.

Repin dropped the venture in favour of *Tsarvena Sofya* but resumed in 1880 when he and Serov toured the Ukraine, the first of three major trips in search of material for the painting.⁹⁵ Repin also made many sketches of the locals, descendants of the Zaporozhye, seeking ethnographic likenesses. In particular he made use of a large collection of Cossack artefacts housed on the Kachanovka estate of V.V. Tarnovsky in Chernigov province. Tarnovsky, who appears in the final painting as the seated Cossack to the left of the scribe, in black hat and distinctive moustache, was painted in rich 17th century costume with sabre and pistols in an oil sketch, *The Hetman* (Sumy Museum, 1880) and appears amongst the sketches with which Repin filled many albums (1880, Ill.29).⁹⁶

On his return to Moscow Repin began working diligently, filled with a renewed sense of national pride:

"...I have been living without break with my Cossacks; it is impossible to leave them – such a cheerful people...Without doubt all that Gogol wrote of them is true! One hell of a race! Nobody in the whole world felt so deeply about freedom, equality and brotherhood! Throughout their existence the Zaporozhye remained free, they surrendered to nobody..."⁹⁷

The first full oil sketch dates from this period and shows a smaller but much brighter composition than the finished piece. The background, depicting boats on an azure sea, shimmering white in the midday heat, was later replaced by the smokey blue-grey haze of the Cossack camp.⁹⁸

The ebullient mood conveyed to Stasov soon changed. Doubts about

the composition led the artist to suggest to Tolstoy, whom he first met earlier that year, that he might drop the letter-writing scene altogether and begin another.⁹⁹ Early the following year, reporting on an exhibition at the Moscow Society of the Patrons of Art, he appeared to have dropped the subject.

"Ah, life, life! Why do artists leave it out? The devil take it; I shall abandon all these historical resurrections of the dead, all these popular ethnographic scenes; I shall move to Petersburg and begin paintings I conceived long ago, directly from stirring reality, surrounding us, understood by us, and which move us far more than past events."¹⁰⁰

The second field trip, to the Kuban, in the company of his son Yury, did not take place until May-June of 1888, after which time work on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was pursued in earnest. In these months they toured the Volga on horseback and by steamer, eventually settling in the Cossack village of Pashkovskaya where Repin set about making more drawings of the inhabitants, many of whom are now known to us by name.¹⁰¹ One more trip in Southern Russia, down the Volga to the Crimea, took place in June 1890.

Repin was assisted in his quest for historical accuracy by the historian and archaeologist Professor D.I. Yavornitsky, who appears in the finished painting as the scribe, and who provided the artist with documentary materials and artefacts from his collection of Ukrainian antiquities.¹⁰²

By the time work was completed Repin had, perhaps consciously, emulated the labours of his hero Aleksandr Ivanov, both in terms of the longevity of the project and the number of sketches completed, all in relation to one canvas. Both works span more than a decade in the making and include many oil studies which can be regarded as independent works of art. Like Ivanov Repin also made large, seemingly finished variants of the painting.¹⁰³

During the years from conception to completion, Repin retained a passion for the Cossack people which bordered on fanaticism. In her childhood memoirs Vera Repin recalls him acting out Cossack games with the children: young Yury had his head shaved leaving only a 'chub', the single lock or top-knot characteristic of the Ukrainian Cossacks,

and was kitted out in a yellow zhupan (a kind of jerkin), Ukrainian shirt and a pair of wide Cossack trousers. Repin's infectious preoccupation with Cossack literature was communicated to his children by reading aloud to them, instilling a sense of pride in their ancestry.¹⁰⁴

This idolisation of the Cossack way of life was grounded in a respect for what he regarded as their intrinsic qualities; a rumbustious love of freedom coupled with a fierce sense of independence and national pride, grounded in an autonomous, equitable political system. Thankfully these sentiments did not spill over into racial jingoism and the elements which Repin admired are admirably retained in the finished painting, the kernel of which, a hymn to freedom, is outlined in a letter to the writer Nikolai Leskov:

"I should confess to you that *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* has its idea. I have always been interested in the history of peoples and their artistic memorials, especially the building of cities, architecture, moments reflecting the universal life of cities, most usually associated with republican regimes of course. In each detail remaining from these times one can observe an unusual spirit and energy; everything is done with talent and vigour, assuming a wide civic significance.

...And our Zaporozhye delight me with this same love of freedom, their uplifting heroic spirit. Here the bold strength of the Russian people renounced the comfortable life to establish an equitable brotherhood and to defend their most cherished principles of orthodox faith and personal freedom. Today these seem like obsolete words, but then, at a time when thousands of Slavs were led into slavery by the might of the Muslims, when religion, honour and freedom were being desecrated, then it was a terribly stirring idea. And so this handful of bold men, naturally the most gifted of their times (the intelligentsia of their times since most were educated) strove not only to defend Europe from the eastern plunderers, but even threatened this then strong civilisation, mocking their eastern arrogance."¹⁰⁵

In November of 1891, twelve years after the first sketch, this much anticipated work was finally shown in public. Repin had resigned from the Peredvizhniki in March of that year¹⁰⁶ and so *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was displayed at a massive independent one-man show amongst 298 works, including thirty studies for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, which was the central attraction.¹⁰⁷

By now the artistic climate was very much changed from the time when the first studies were drawn. The Peredvizhniki had embarked on a self-destructive bureaucratic ossification and Alexander III, through the newly appointed President of the Academy, Count Ivan Tolstoy, was making concerted efforts to revitalise this august institution. Suggestions for a reformed Academy were canvassed and the proposals published,¹⁰⁸ Repin himself being elected a member of the Government Commission in April 1890. Stasov first voiced fears to Tretyakov on the imminent demise of the Peredvizhniki and the metamorphosis of some of its members from radical artists to lowly academicians, just a month before *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was exhibited,¹⁰⁹ by which time he and Repin were once more embarking on opposing courses.

On a separate front a burgeoning diversity in the arts was also threatening both the realist style and the narrative content which, with differences of ethos, had remained unchallenged as the predominant vehicle for artistic expression in both the Academic and Peredvizhnik camps. The seed of Diaghilev's *Mir iskkustva*, which assumed international significance in the late 1890s-early 1900s, was sown in 1890 with the formation of a circle of artists around Alexander Benois, and the establishment of the St. Petersburg Society of Artists the same year further eroded the artistic monopoly so long enjoyed by the realists.¹¹⁰

It is surprising then to find that in this period of artistic flux the verdict on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was more favourable, that is to say less divided, than it had been with Repin's previous works. The combination of nationalist subject matter and a vigorous, painterly execution found ready admirers, and where formerly opinion had split predictably along progressive and conservative lines, this buoyant, riproaring slice of 17th century Cossack revelry, lacking tendentiousness or even the most general of critical analogies, was appreciated much in the vein that the author had intended. Stasov, unpredictably, but possibly with an eye to postponing Repin's secondment to the Academy, gave the painting a flattering reception.¹¹¹ Modernist artists were also positive in their assessments: Benois commended its lack of a strong storyline in favour of pure merriment,¹¹² and Dobuzhinsky recalled this as one of the few

works by Repin which prompted his admiration.¹¹³

The unpretentious subject matter was however criticised as being ambivalent, since the historic episode which forms a relatively weak narrative, a pretext for a lively ethnographic scene, was enjoyable but lacked deeper significance. One reviewer, whilst full of praise for the composition which encircled the viewer, drawing him into the action, likened the painting's lack of substance to expanding a Turgenev short story into a full-length novel.¹¹⁴

Curiously, or perhaps suspiciously, the routine search for a critical, ideological content has appeared only later. But whilst the Soviet view has long regarded *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* as affirming the continuing historical role of the people, a prototype for the positive, heroic images of the socialist realist school,¹¹⁵ little has been made of political analogy. An implied critical tendency, that the public would naturally make comparison between the Cossacks of yore, champions of the oppressed, and those of Repin's day, the notoriously brutal and conservative constituents of the Imperial bodyguard, has been a recent, western innovation.¹¹⁶

Although *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was exhibited alongside Repin's revolutionary canvases *Arrest of a Propagandist* and *A Secret Meeting*, as well as *Ivan the Terrible*, which might have disposed viewers to reading between imaginary lines, they would have had to make the comparison from amongst 298 exhibits, a singularly obscure way of making a political point. Beyond this, that the paintings themselves suggested a critical correlation in the minds of the public, there is no precedent for this individual reading of *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* and Repin's contemporaries, always on the look-out for such components, failed to make the connection.¹¹⁷

The last word on the painting's political inoffensiveness belongs to Alexander III who, less than a decade after the controversy surrounding *Ivan the Terrible* purchased *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* for 35,000 roubles, the highest price ever paid for a single Russian canvas.¹¹⁸

A lack of the tendentiousness which critics and public firmly associated with Repin not only pleased commentators of various viewpoints but invited closer association with technical and painterly

aspects of the work. The composition, as the reviewer for *Nablyudatel* pointed out, is artfully conceived to draw one right into the action, encircling the viewer with the central group of seated and standing figures, with the edges of the painting employing cut-off figures to decrease the notion of a finite space, suggesting an unseen continuation of events beyond the limits of the canvas. The feeling of being involved with the action is further heightened by the two figures at extreme ends of the picture, and by the bald Cossack seated in the lower centre, all of whom present their backs to the viewer, casually unaware of his existence. The bald pate of the cossack reclining on his barrel, which juts directly out at the viewer, is a further piece of compositional daring enhancing the illusion of participation.¹¹⁹

The composition, which looks natural and obvious, disguises a complex placement of over seventeen figures in the central group alone. In succeeding sketches Repin drew these figures closer to one another, increasing the sense of their comradely unity. Their cohesion is emphasised by placing a number of vertical motifs around them, compacting the group into a tight huddle. Starting from the musket slung over the shoulder of the standing figure on the left, this device ranges through the upright lances, which again disappear out of the picture space, ending in the standing figure on the far right. A gesticulating Cossack at the rear, placed opposite and above the bald Cossack, points back into the picture, establishing a link between the exterior and interior of the painting. The figure of the reclining Cossack, his sword, the arm of the gesticulating Cossack, the mandoline resting in the lap of the bare-chested figure, as well as sundry items of weaponry, are examples of unnecessary foreshortening which, in tandem with the arrangement of figures, complicate the composition. Though these aspects of artistic bravado are easily taken for granted they caused Repin many difficulties. A year before exhibition, but over 18 months after the joyous letter to Leskov, Repin wrote to one of his pupils, Elizaveta Zvantseva:

"I have been working flat out on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* now. I worked on the general harmony of the picture. What a labour! Each spot, colour and line had to express the general mood of the

subject, to harmonize with and characterize each subject within the painting. I had to sacrifice a great deal and make many changes, both in the colour and in the figures. Of course I did not change the essence of the picture - that is still there... I work sometimes until I simply drop.¹²⁰

A few months later he told the jurist turned poet Zhirkevich:

"I have still not finished *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*. How difficult it is to finish a picture! I have to make so many sacrifices for the sake of overall harmony... I cannot see the end: progress is difficult. For a while I abandoned work on the picture altogether."¹²¹

The harmonisation of composition and colour to evoke mood is achieved by a combination of detailed draughtsmanship and lively handling of paint. The Cossacks exhibit closely observed racial characteristics, though the individualisation of each tends to undermine the impression of a general mass. Many of the accessories are painted with a Dutch-like fidelity which does not reproduce well and which is at odds with the rough, swirling, impasted painting of the figures. The textural studies of metals and fabrics, particularly the grubby white sheepskin worn by the standing figure to the right, are all rendered in thick, encrusted pigments which together with the brightly coloured Ukrainian accoutrements are reminiscent of the baroque decoration of Rembrandt, with whom Suvorin compared Repin.¹²²

Though *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was a popular and critical triumph for Repin its central weakness, the expansion of an historical anecdote into a major painting, did not go unnoticed. The correspondent who compared the work to an over-blown short story, concluded "this is not a history painting, just genre."¹²³ Tolstoy, who saw much promise in *Ivan the Terrible* was similarly disappointed, calling the picture a study (этюд) and lamenting its lack of a serious and meaningful guiding thought.¹²⁴ The forced nature of the Bacchic revelry, a pantomimic, thigh-slapping scene out of *Taras Bulba*, seems all the more prominent to modern eyes, and whilst the artist achieved his ambition to capture a roistering, veracious piece of virile Russian history, a symphony of laughter, one cannot help wondering

whether the subject and the outcome, successful as they are, were worth the expenditure of so much time and energy.

Repin and History Painting

The three paintings discussed here are by no means the only historical themes on which Repin worked, but of their kind they are the only large-scale pieces which warranted a sustained commitment. Between *Tsarevna Sofya* and *Ivan the Terrible* Repin produced another mediaeval scene, *Choosing the Tsar's Bride* (Art Gallery, Perm, 1884; 1897),¹²⁵ about which he left little comment, a practise Soviet commentators have been pleased to follow. Other themes include *Boyarín Romanov in Captivity* (Russian Museum, 1895), a melodramatic piece of historical theatre,¹²⁶ and *Minin's Call to Nizhni-Novgorod* (*The Interregnum of 1613*), (Penaty, 1876; 1915) a medium-sized, polychromatic crowd scene, conceived as a student piece and not finished until the artist was in his sixties. He also continued to paint on Cossack life through the last decades of his life,¹²⁷ and in his seventies worked with his son Yuri on a painting depicting Alexander of Macedon.¹²⁸ Historical scenes both distant and recent were also the subject of a number of now rarely seen watercolours.¹²⁹

Though some conclusions can be drawn regarding Repin's approach towards historical painting such a small output naturally restricts a discussion already complicated by the varied interpretations placed upon the term 'history', the meaning of which was debated throughout Europe in the 19th century. Academic History Painting, though resembling merely historical tableaux, was for the embodiment of eternal values, for which the bible, myth or antiquity were deemed proper. The transition to historical genre, accurate reconstructions of anecdotal, every-day scenes, whether by Gérôme or Shvarts, broadened the notion of history by accepting that grandeur and elevated moral thought were no longer prerequisites. The democratisation of history, the depiction of ordinary people who are the subject or witnesses to events in the works of Fernand Cormon in France and Surikov in Russia, further expanded the limits of what could be regarded as history.

But it was Realism in the arts that transformed history painting by

denying its existence; at least in its current forms. The views of Proudhon and Taine in the 1860s,¹³⁰ echoed by Baudelaire in his *Salon* reviews,¹³¹ called repeatedly for contemporaneity. History became the here and now, the objective reflection of the epoch into which the artist had been born, the only one which he had a right, indeed a duty, to depict. In effect history was turned about, from something inherited to something bequeathed.

This viewpoint, the essence of realist philosophy, was however confused and diluted in art by those who adopted only the realist style (sometimes supplanted by the term naturalism) or realist subject matter, usually associated with low-life or a lack of idealisation. In such a manner Ge's savage crucifixion scenes are real, unidealised, concrete, but ultimately unobserved. The painted solidity and veracity of Surikov's crowd scenes, his concern with specifics rather than generalisations, individuals rather than stereotypes, labels the artist as a realist,¹³² though this is not an epithet which the French thinkers would have applied to one who engaged in reconstructing Petrine Russia: nor was it one Stasov felt comfortable with.

The dearth of Repin's historical scenes must in great measure be put down to Stasov's influence. Though Repin showed himself unwilling to be steam-rollered by Stasov's domineering counsel he put great store by his approval, a fact which made his admonishments the harder to bear. On this subject Stasov was intransigent, insisting on contemporaneity, to which he added nationalism. Repin's contemporary canvases were, in Stasov's view, his history paintings — modern history. In this he accorded with Courbet:

"The history of an age finishes with the age itself and with those of its representatives who have expressed it. It is not given to new ages to add something to the expression of past ages, to aggrandise or to embellish the past. That which has been has been. It is the duty of the human spirit to always start anew, always in the present, taking as its point of departure that which has already been accomplished."¹³³

Whilst blighting *Tsarevna Sofya*, Stasov took the opportunity to deliver a disquisition on history painting, complaining of an European dearth of contemporary subjects which were at once commonplace and

historical:

"History as it is generally understood (with such rapture and enthusiasm!) is rubbish, worthless. At the last Universal Exhibition and the huge annual Paris Exhibition last year, where more than 3000 pictures were shown, where was the history? Where were the history paintings? And I do not mean museums with old pictures on past times and people, by past artists to whom everything beyond expression and sentiment was *terra incognita*."¹³⁴

That Repin strayed so spectacularly into historical painting does not of course make him a non-realist painter; these were only a small part of his artistic output. But his interest and keenness for the works of others (he greatly admired Vasnetsov's *After Prince Igor's Battle with the Polovtsy* of which Stasov was contemptuous)¹³⁵ suggests that he was deterred from following a natural inclination by the excessive criticism such scenes aroused. Though Stasov softened with old age to approve the nationalist content of *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, such a determent was after all his intention.

Of the various categories of history painting Repin's works fit easily into none. Though *Ivan the Terrible* was interpreted as a moral discourse on the evils of violence, which would be in keeping with traditional academic History Painting, the squalid, brutal realisation of Ivan's predicament is the very antithesis of the enshrinement of noble virtues. Historical genre too seems inappropriate to describe Repin's works. Even *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* is far removed from the prosaic scenes-in-the-life-of school which characterise such an approach. The Cossack revelry is anecdotal, but it is anecdotal of a specific, extraordinary event, not of the daily, repetitive existence employed by Sergei Ivanov, Andrei Ryabushkin or Apollinary Vasnetsov.

The Zaporozhye Cossacks has affiliations with democratic history since it brings on to the stage ordinary, anonymous players, but this is in marked contrast to his other major historical works, and if the democratisation of the past was the artist's concern one would have expected this to feature prominently in more than one canvas.

An aspect which unites all three paintings is Repin's oblique view of the past. In *Tsarevna Sofya* he chose not the dramatic insurrection of the streltsy, nor as in Surikov's painting on that theme the

aftermath, the mass suffering caused by failure, but the Tsarevna's personal condition on the anniversary of the event. With *Ivan the Terrible* we are presented not with the Siege of Kazan or the destruction of Novgorod but an intimate and sordid episode in the Tsar's life. And the very theme of *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, an obscure historical episode whose only action consists of a crowd of Cossacks roaring with laughter, is a particularly unconventional foil to the views of regal Russia which appeared regularly at both the Academic and Peredvizhnik exhibitions.

Despite avoiding a stilted archaeological correctness Repin's history paintings all share the same careful, literary construction, passing through various rough drafts, all based on extensive, painstaking researches, to arrive at the finished work. The extent to which he sustained this practice is surprising when one considers the lack of importance it assumes in the finished works: even in *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* the historical accessories add colour and panache to the scene but are purely incidental to the *joie de vivre* which predominates. Such an outlook was however characteristic of the times and artists of Repin's generation were habituated to authenticity whether painting *Ivan the Terrible* or a group of bedraggled barge-haulers.

It would be difficult to make a case for Repin as some sort of quasi-scientific interpreter of the historical process, in the mould of Zola. The evolution of history and its ramifications for the present simply do not seem to have exercised him. Neither could the single, avowed, and spectacularly successful example of *Ivan the Terrible* qualify him as an adherent of utilising history to mirror contemporary troubles, a practice of which Kramskoy approved.¹³⁶ Repin's account of the picture's genesis stresses a reflection of his personal emotional state during the early 1880s and whilst this was a condition with which many clearly empathised, a personal mental and moral purification seems as high in the artist's mind as does a critical denunciation. The frenzied activity and macabre atmosphere out of which *Ivan the Terrible* was born suggests that the project was conceived more in an apotropaic mood, to placate the horrors of contemporary life, than as a service to society.

Repin's approach to history was commendably flexible where Stasov's was rigid, but it was not fully formulated or consistently expressed, which is possibly an indication of how little the question troubled him. Whilst a convincing case could be made that the aesthetic qualities of all three major historical paintings are more evident than any real or imagined critical analogies, the constituents which predominate in each are drama and psychology. The latter is sacrificed to the former in *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, though each figure is an individual portrait, but *Tsarevna Sofya* and *Ivan the Terrible* are loaded with both, almost to breaking point. A fascination with individuals, strong-willed, wicked or coarsely robust, but above all for an eye-catching, dramatic presentation, the need to make an impact on the viewer, is more clearly marked in each canvas than any other trait. Though arriving via a different route, one can conclude with Stasov that Repin was not a natural history painter: not because he lacked the imagination to conjure up the past — *Ivan the Terrible* did this with frightening veracity — but because beyond the most general of analogies Repin was temperamentally and fundamentally unconcerned with the relationship between history and contemporaneity, how the past fathered the present, and more mesmerised by extremes of human emotion, what Stasov called "psychic explosions".¹³⁷

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In Russia there was no social catalyst on the scale of the European revolutions of 1848, and the integration of the lower classes into

CHAPTER 4

Modern History Painting – Contemporary Themes

The realist credo of contemporaneity, which usurped the historical mantle, was summed up by Courbet:

"Historical art is, by its very essence, contemporary. Every age should have its artists, who will express it and depict it for the future. An age that has not been able to express itself through its own artists, does not have the right to be expressed by outside artists. This would be falsifying history.

The true artists are those who take up their epoch at exactly the point to which it has been carried by preceding ages. To retreat is to do nothing, is to work without result, is to have neither understood nor profited from the lessons of the past."¹

Though Courbet dismissed all titles imposed upon his art, even that of realist, he was adamant as to how the artist should address his task:

"I also believe that painting is an essentially CONCRETE art and can only consist of the representation of REAL AND EXISTING objects. It is a completely physical language that has as words all visible objects, and an ABSTRACT object, invisible, and non-existent, is not part of paintings' domain."²

In France the up-dating and democratisation of history painting was strengthened by the Revolution of 1848. For a while politics and art united in espousing the dignity of labour, and the common man, a central support of the new régime, was considered as a worthy, independent subject.³ This new found respect for the labourer, especially the agrarian peasant, was most fully expressed in the detached works of Courbet, whose *Burial at Ornans* (Musée d'Orsay, 1849) audaciously treated the mundaneness of peasant life on a scale hitherto reserved for momentous historical events, and in the humane, emotive paintings of Millet, whose monumental *Man with a Hoe* (Private Collection, San Francisco, 1859-1862) is at once both brutal yet noble. In van Gogh's view it was Millet, not Manet, who epitomised "the very core of modern art."⁴

In Russia there was no social catalyst on the scale of the European revolutions of 1848, and the integration of the lower classes into

genre painting by artists such as Yermenev, and more fully by Venetsianov, continued slowly and over a longer period than in France. The reforms of the 1860s did however galvanise radical critics to demand that the liberal, literary genre of social *exposé* (обличительный),⁵ reflected in art by depictions of drunken fathers, impoverished widows and hubristic petty officials, needed to sharpen its cutting edge.

The political awareness of art students during the 1860s has been much exaggerated in Soviet publications, but it would be unreasonable to suggest that they were oblivious to the critical pressures coming to bear on them. They did not however respond to the more extreme calls of writers like Ivan Dmitriyev,⁶ who was contemptuous of the half-heartedness and servility of the social genre, or Dobrolyubov,⁷ who wanted nothing less than the exposure of Russia's moral bankruptcy, nor Pisarev, whose utilitarian outlook is summarised in the title of his most famous work, *The Destruction of Aesthetics*.⁸ Despite their injunctions the reform-minded social genre persisted, though it was injected with a noticeable degree of urgency, tackling contemporary themes on a larger scale and with greater candour.

In the same manner that artists in industrialising France, still essentially a rural culture with a predominantly peasant population, treated contemporaneity largely in terms of agrarian vicissitudes, so in Russia, a country of overwhelmingly rural composition and far inferior technical development, populated almost entirely by the peasant class, only recently rid of serfdom, and virtually lacking a middle class, the artistic focus was on the lower orders.⁹ Here however the objective pretension of French realism (which can be said to have been already undermined by the sentiment of Millet's works), was not considered desirable. Under an autocratic, censorial regime, the critical element of artistic creation had long been accepted as the norm, the only debating points being how overtly, with what severity, and to what end the criticisms were shaped. Chernyshevsky, writing as early as 1855, pre-empted not only Courbet's insistence that art be concrete, non-abstract, and based in reality, but went further, insisting it pass judgment:

"...if a man, whose mental activity is powerfully stimulated by the problems that are aroused in his mind by his observation of life, is gifted with artistic talent, he will, in his works, consciously or unconsciously, express the striving to pronounce judgment on the phenomena that interested him...In such a case, the artist becomes a thinker, the works of art, while remaining in the sphere of art, acquire a scientific significance."¹⁰

Though not a confessed disciple of Chernyshevsky's it was once more Perov, based in Moscow and therefore at a remove from imperial St. Petersburg, who made the artistic running during the 1860s in a series of uncompromisingly bleak paintings which addressed the deprivations of both the rural and urban muzhiks. These include *Next in Line at the Pool* (State Art Museum, Minsk, 1865), a wretched group of tattered peasants queueing for water in arctic conditions; *The Last Journey*, (Tretyakov Gallery, 1865), inspired by Nekrasov's poem *Red-Nosed Frost*, which shows an emaciated horse pulling a sledge on which rests the coffin of a dead peasant, accompanied by his widow and two children. *The Last Tavern at the City Gates*, (Tretyakov Gallery, 1868), a particularly gloomy, snow-bound work, depicts the boundary line dividing the city and the countryside. Against a raw, clear sky, two sledges are stationed outside a tavern, last refuge before the desolate countryside beyond. In one of the sledges a woman sits freezing along with the horses and a dog, her lot clearly no better than that of the animals.¹¹

These forthright reflections of peasant hardships and stoical endurance marked a new, robust tone within the genre, lacking idealisation or picturesque qualities. They also heralded the appearance of the muzhik portrait as an independent and legitimate subject. Perov's *Fomushka sych* (1868, Ill. 30),¹² an individualistic, wordly-wise portrayal of an hirsute old peasant, proved a forerunner of many memorable portraits of rural worthies, including Kramskoy's *Miller* (Russian Museum, 1873) and *Mina Moiseyev* (Russian Museum, 1882).

In their hey-day the Peredvizhniki were responsible for depicting both the sufferings and the integrity of the peasant in a sympathetic but hard-hitting manner. On show at the first Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1871 were two paintings by Pryanishnikov, *Peasants Driving Home*

(Tretyakov Gallery, 1872), another joyless, frozen slice of life, and *Burned Out*, a desperate scene of a mother and children amidst the charred ruins of their small home.¹³ But as familiarity lessened the impact of such works the original ethos was diluted with anecdote and sentimentality, or, during the more politicised populist seventies, espoused a reverence for the muzhik which many artists, themselves of peasant stock, found positively mawkish.¹⁴ Nikolai Bogdanov-Belsky, in pictures such as *At the School Door* (Russian Museum, 1897), is typical of peasant scenes executed from the 1890s onward, painted in fresh, bright colours, picturesque, anecdotal and devoid of the unsettling element which marked earlier canvases. The 1890s did see a fresh infusion of critical-realist blood in the shape of painters like Nikolai Kasatkin and Sergei Ivanov, but a work like I.P. Bogdanov's *The Novice*, (Tretyakov Gallery, 1893), showing a tearful child apprentice being ticked-off by his drunken boss, is characteristic of many late 19th century canvases which shifted their focus from the general deprivations of the lower classes to specific, sentimental renditions of individual misfortune.

For artists of the 1860s and the first generation of Peredvizhnik painters, peasant scenes were inextricably linked with ethical and political philosophies and critics freely indulged in a 'by their works shall ye know them' school of assessment, often with great confusion. In the same way that an artist could be acclaimed a radical reformer for exposing the brutal conditions of the toiling masses, it was equally possible to laud him or her as a nationalist surveyor of the Russian scene. Such was and remains the case with Repin's first international success as an artist, *Barge-haulers on the Volga* (1870-1873, Ill.31). In its time, and since, this has been greeted as a denunciation of autocratic injustice, a hymn to indigenous peasant fortitude, or, on rare occasions, simply as a piece of virtuoso painting.

Barge-haulers on the Volga

In the first of two major reviews of contemporary Russian art, published in 1882-1883, Stasov gave his approval to the advocacy of

the 'living art' expounded by both Proudhon and Courbet¹⁵ but did not see fit to endorse Courbet's dismissal of "those who wake up in the night crying out, 'I want to judge! I must pass judgment!'"¹⁶ In the light of this stance, to which Stasov long remained obstinately faithful, it is not difficult to see why he greeted Repin's history paintings with such dismay. Believing that Repin's work mirrored his own promulgation of a realist, critical and essentially Russian brand of art, he early singled out the young artist for praise and promotion, providing a platform for discussion, and a degree of positive exposure, that placed him firmly in the public eye. And it was chiefly with *Barge-haulers on the Volga*, or *Burlaki*, that Repin's career was made.

The painting, which originated from an incident in 1868 when Repin first saw the barge-haulers on the river Neva, suggests that a social parallel was then uppermost in his mind. He was at first struck by the gaiety of the river scenery – stylish dachas, orderly gardens, brilliant flowers and brightly attired picnickers – but this vision was marred by the appearance of the barge-haulers, a filthy, dishevelled, worn out group of figures, pulling their load upstream. In the shocking contrast between these pitiful men and the joyful, oblivious holiday makers, Repin saw the potential for a painting which would express his indignation.¹⁷

The shock seems to have been unfeigned since, surprisingly, Repin says he was totally ignorant of how demoralising an existence the barge-haulers enjoyed.¹⁸ On the suggestion of his fellow student Savitsky, Repin, together with his brother Vasily and art students Fyodor Vasilyev and Yevgeny Makarov, embarked on their celebrated Volga expedition in the summer of 1870, to better observe the burlaki, and to gather material for the projected painting. As they progressed the students sketched and painted landscapes, riverside scenes, boats, fishermen, group and individual peasant portraits, and each other.¹⁹

Unlike his later works it took Repin some time and much rearranging to find the correct composition. The first sketch, done on the Neva in 1868, is just as Repin described his initial encounter with the barge-haulers, trudging along a high bank in harness. This truncated watercolour, which shows three haulers entering the picture high up on

the left, curiously contains no reference to the fashionable gentlefolk whom he found such an alarming contrast to the peasants.²⁰ A different composition of 1870-1872 shows a larger group of exhausted barge-haulers, now facing the viewer, straining to the top of a bank as if reaching a mountain summit. They form a human pyramid at the base of the picture, giving it a particularly heroic aspect.²¹

It was to the credit of Vasilyev that Repin was deterred both from the heavy-handed social comparison between the wealthy picnickers and the barge-haulers, as well as the dramatic pyramidal composition which Vasilyev felt was unnatural. He advised Repin to broaden the canvas and to concentrate on the barge-haulers alone.²²

During these years, 1870-1873, Repin was still enagaged on academic set-pieces such as *Job and His Friends* and *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead*, and *Burlaki* was essentially a personal project. In September of 1870, following the Volga expedition, Repin exhibited the fruits of the trip at the Academy, including a large oil work, *Storm on the Volga* (Russian Museum, 1870),²³ which depicts a number of barge-haulers grappling with a raft in rough waters. Stasov later recalled:

"Even now, I vividly remember how my friends and I were delighted and amazed by Repin's sketches...It was literally a promenade to which artists came in droves and where they stayed for hours, looking at these small pictures, without frames, littered about the floor."²⁴

Grand Duke Vladimir, the Academy's president, whom Repin was later to upset with the exhibition of *Ivan the Terrible*, was amongst the visitors, and on the evidence presented by the sketches commissioned the finished picture. In March of the following year the painting, which was still uncompleted, received first prize at the exhibition of the Society for the Promotion of Arts and, following a second trip to the Volga in summer-autumn of 1872, the finished canvas was exhibited at the Academy of Arts in March, 1873.²⁵

The composition which Repin eventually decided upon adheres closely to a pencil sketch of 1870 which was worked in oils the same year.²⁶ Both show nine figures, though the finished painting, of eleven haulers, allows individual portraits of ten. Between these sketches

and completion of *Burlaki* Repin also experimented with a further oil version, *Barge-haulers Crossing a Ford* (1872, Ill. 32).²⁷ This train of eight figures allowed portraits of only the first four, though the composition, with the haulers knee-deep in water, coming relentlessly out of the canvas, was considerably more dramatic, the storm-laden sky heightening the misery of the scene.²⁸

The diagonal motif of the finished painting was a compositional device frequently used to suggest movement towards the viewer, and to effect an illusion of recession, and Repin made particular capital out of the convention. The line of haulers, their feet dug into the sandy flats as they take up the strain on the harnesses which shackle them together, seem effortlessly and naturally posed, giving no hint of the variety of metamorphoses that the scene underwent.

The sun-soaked background with the river shimmering blue and white under a scorching, cloudless sky, paradoxically enhances the misery of the scene, as the haulers trudge through the blazing noonday heat, casting no shadow. The sandy wasteground of the riverbank is littered with a few pieces of driftwood and the remains of a broken wicker fishing pot, ominously reminiscent of skeletal remains in a desert. Each man is carefully individualised, having been based on life studies. Repin took great care with these portraits and was at pains to stress what he considered their objective characteristics, chiefly their collective integrity, though he had to battle hard against superstitions which equated posing with "selling one's soul to the Antichrist."²⁹ Repin was particularly attached to Kanin, the sagacious forefigure, whom he likened to a Greek philosopher, educated on Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and Pythagoras, sold into Roman slavery.³⁰

In St. Petersburg the painting was awarded the Vigée-Lebrun medal before it was sent to the Vienna World Exhibition in the Spring of 1873. Repin, on his way to Paris, stopped in Vienna long enough to see it receive a bronze medal. But before *Burlaki* was seen on the continent the debate regarding the artist's intentions had already begun, and though it seems clear from Repin's account that he was driven by a humanitarian concern and genuine fascination for his subjects, commentators interpreted the work as they saw fit.

Stasov assessed it as the role model for his own brand of Russian

painting: critical, realist and national. He compared Repin's talent to that of Gogol and pronounced that the picture was unsurpassed in Russian art.³¹ Wary of pitiful sympathies for the haulers he was at pains to stress the brutally real yet positive portrayal of these human pack-animals, pointing to the central motif, the youth lifting his head, as embodying the will not to be crushed by his labour, presaging a positive future.³² Stasov's reading of the picture did not alter with time and nearly a decade later he repeated these views.

"At 28-29 he created the foremost painting of the Russian school. Simple people, working like cattle, peasants brought down to the level of horses, a centuries-old story. Such important and profound concerns had hitherto not been tackled in Russian art. Its appeal was universal...you will not soon find another painting in European museums which so depicts the bright sun, hot air and summer's intense heat. And under this same sun, whilst others take refuge at home, in the shade, in shops, chambers and halls, is a whole crowd of unfortunate convicts, but convicts to somebody else's will, voluntary hirelings, trudging their way, dishevelled, along the Volga's banks. And the whole century they have gone this route. A thousand years of such life has brought this terrible *voluntary* state."³³

Those who shared this interpretation included Musorgsky, who told Stasov: "I am constantly tortured by the thought of Repin's *Burlaki*..."³⁴ Nikolai Ge most generously told the artist that it outstripped his own *Last Supper*, though he had reservations about the lack of generalisation, feeling that the individuality of each figure lessened the overall harmony.³⁵ At the time of painting Kramskoy seemed lukewarm about the project, commenting in a tone redolent of impatience: "Repin by the way is still painting his *Barge-haulers*: a trifle long - today he paints one, tomorrow another, and at some time or other yet a third."³⁶ A few years later however he declared that the painting had broken new ground in Russian art: "Four years ago Perov was ahead of everyone, only four years ago, but after Repin's *Barge-haulers* it is not possible."³⁷

Semiradsky's *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, a conventional religious subject, also attracted much attention at the Academic exhibition, and the comparisons to be drawn between Repin's peasant subject and Semiradsky's traditional biblical drama became the focus for opposing

viewpoints. At first Stasov ignored Semiradsky's painting, but later reviewed it solely in order to point out the superiority of Repin's canvas, drawn from life, and in the process to outline the debate between the realist and academic schools of painting.³⁹ Fyodor Bruni, under whom Repin studied at the Academy, did not mince his words, calling *Burlaki* "a great profanation of art."³⁹

Dostoyevsky, who reviewed the exhibition for the conservative *Grazhdanin*, and who was vehemently opposed to tendentious art, also denied the critical, social element of *Burlaki*, though in the process he found himself unexpectedly pleased with the painting.

"The moment I had read in the papers about Mr. Repin's haulers, I got frightened. The theme itself is horrible: somehow we take it for granted that haulers are particularly fit to symbolize the familiar idea of the insolvent debt of the upper classes to the people. And I was ready to meet them all in uniforms with well-known labels on their foreheads. And what? Much to my joy all my fears proved unfounded: haulers, genuine haulers, and nothing more. Not one of them is shouting from the canvas to the spectator: 'Look how unfortunate I am, and what indebtedness you have incurred to the people!'"⁴⁰

Nevertheless, having further expanded on what he saw as the individual traits of the barge-haulers: merriment, cunning, deceit, quarrelsomeness and resignation, he ended:

"...And do you know, dear critic, that precisely this humble innocence of thought... achieves the purpose - your tendentious, liberal purpose - much more effectively than you suspect!... It is impossible not to start reflecting that one is indebted, actually indebted, to the people... For this haulers' 'gang' will recur in one's dreams; it will be recalled some fifteen years hence! And had they not been so natural, innocent and simple, they would not have produced such an impression..."⁴¹

In effect Dostoyevsky saw precisely the same message in the painting as did Stasov, they merely disagreed on the artist's approach: Stasov believed it was overt and intentional, Dostoyevsky that it was insidious, working independently of the artist's primary intention, to depict the interesting personal traits of the haulers.

The widely differing interpretations of the haulers, Stasov seeing suffering where Dostoyevsky saw life's rich tapestry, was reflected in

continental reviews. At the Vienna World Exhibition of 1873 an apoplectic Stasov noted that the German painter Friedrich Pecht wrote rapturously of the "sun-filled" painting, praising its aestheticism, but contrived not to notice the barge-haulers: "Not another word did he say about this same painting. It is as if he did not even see it."⁴²

Five years later, at the 1878 Paris Universal Exhibition, the French critic Vashon called *Burlaki* "a staggering scene" and spoke of:

"...ordinary people with severe, wild features...All those unfortunates, stretched out and toiling hard under the scorching sky, burning their chests...disfigured and exhausted by deprivations...moral and physical torments. One, with long suffering submissiveness carries his beggarly yoke; another proudly raises his head and stares at the sky in fury with a look of damnation, as if inviting death to end his terrible existence."⁴³

Though this constitutes a reading of the picture as a denunciation of a social injustice, the description of the youth is the very opposite of Stasov's symbol of hope. Another French writer, Jules Claresi, described the haulers as: "...a mixture of dishevelled and savage animals in human form. All that is most horrifyingly thin and ferociously savage has been gathered here."⁴⁴ Returning to Dostoyevsky, it is hard to believe that the two writers are describing the same canvas: "Nice, familar figures: the two fore-haulers are almost laughing..."⁴⁵

In reviewing the reviewers Stasov was particularly delighted with the appraisal of Paul Manz, who likened *Burlaki* to Courbet's *Stonebreakers* and predicted that Proudhon, had he seen it, would have been similarly moved to tears.⁴⁶ But in general Stasov was dismissive of viewpoints which contradicted his own. He felt that outsiders, strangers to the special social conditions of Russia, had failed to understand it and in an article describing Millet as the "the French Repin" he concluded:

"Repin painted something of the horror, the stupendousness, which foreigners could not easily understand and they spoke only of wonderful colours and types or chuckled maliciously over convict life in Russia. In similar manner they long misunderstood their own Courbet and Millet: *Le casseur de pierres*, *L'homme à la houe*,

Le gardeur de vaches, Le vieux bûcheron — all ragged unfortunates, eternal sufferers."⁴⁷

It is not easy to pin down Repin's motives in planning *Burlaki*. The humanitarian aspect, a contrast between the haulers and the affluent holiday makers on the Neva, was the impetus for the sketch of 1868. His account of the Volga expedition, however, written late in his life, aware of the turn of the century shift towards aestheticism in the arts, is heavily tinged with claims that the process of painting, and the observation of individual idiosyncracies, were paramount, and that the haulers' social standing did not interest him.⁴⁸ This is at odds with the wretched appearance of the men who Dostoyevsky felt were too poorly attired even for peasants.⁴⁹ There is also evidence, however, that Repin toned down the suffering of the subjects, rejecting, for instance, a sketch of an emaciated, exhausted young hauler, which would have detracted from the positive portrayal of the central youth.⁵⁰

It is also clear from Dostoyevsky's review that regardless of treatment, the subject itself was a controversial one, though the barge-hauler was by no means a novel subject. More than twenty years before Repin's picture Daumier produced his *Man Pulling a Barge*, (Private Collection, Germany, 1848-1852), a single hauler straining hard under the yoke and made more pitiful by his isolation. In Russia, however, class sensitivities and political sensibilities ensured that the barge-haulers, many of whom were victims of the ill-framed reforms of the 1860s, and were forced into this seasonal work by land shortages, had become a byword for suffering, and a cue for instant guilt complexes amongst the affluent.

The painter Vasily Vereshchagin began work on his own *Barge-haulers* after two trips to the Caucasus, in 1863 and 1866, pre-dating Repin's first sight of the haulers by two years. The work was never completed, but a sufficient number of oil, pencil and ink sketches survive, to show how the final work might have looked.⁵¹ Though the studies are based on living models the sketch for the painting itself depicts a generalized crowd of dozens of haulers, all too small to pick out singularly. This scheme is repeated in a work by the landscape artist

Alexei Savrasov, *The Volga River near Yurevets* (Private Collection, France, 1871). Savrasov, a generation older than Repin, conceived this work at the same time as *Burlaki* but, as might be expected, made greater use of the landscape. It has been described as "a most pointed social theme...a protest against the slavish oppression of the people...",⁵² but the lilliputian haulers are almost engulfed by the dramatically lit riverside panorama.

Repin's painting differs from these depictions in treating the seemingly unimportant theme on so large a scale, imbuing it with an importance some thought unwarranted. It forces the viewer to confront the unfortunates as sentient beings, rather than faceless symbols of suffering. This is deliberately and artificially conceived since, judging from other works, it needed considerably more than eleven men to pull a fully-laden barge. *The Volga River near Yurevets* shows a train of at least twenty haulers, whilst Vereshchagin's *Barge-haulers* depicts three gangs, each comprising between twenty and twenty-five men. The figures in Savrasov's work are too small to allow inspection of their dress, but those in Vereshchagin's picture, though slightly tattered, are relatively well attired, presenting a chain of top hats and caps which afford some respite from the sun. This tends to confirm Dostoyevsky's observation that Repin's haulers, whose clothes are literally falling from their backs in some instances, are part of a deliberate exaggeration, for the sake of pathos.⁵³

Possibly even the picture itself is selective to the point of misrepresentation. Repin's admission that the haulers were a revelation to him in 1868 suggests that such scenes were not typical, and would tend to confirm conservative outrage at the wilful selection of an emotive but unrepresentative scene. The art critic Anton Ledakov complained of this anachronism stating: "...Repin painted this at a time when steamers were already scurrying up and down the Volga and the trade of barge-hauler had been left to legend."⁵⁴ It is perhaps surprising then to find the subject being utilised as a symbol of the exploited masses, "beasts of burden", thirty years later, in *The Long Haul* (1903), one of the graphic works of Aristide Delannoy, a self-confessed "anarchist draughtsman".⁵⁵

Savitsky, who first suggested the barge-hauling theme to Repin,

later suffered the ignominy of seeing his *Repair Work on the Railway* (1873, Tretyakov Gallery) criticised for superficial similarities to *Burlaki*, both in general composition and in the subject of peasant toilers under a scorching sun. It might seem however that in terms of contemporaneity, this depiction of industrial incursion into the countryside was a more topical and accurate reflection of rural Russia than *Burlaki*.⁵⁶

Whilst commentators of varying outlooks regarded the painting as tendentious, this was viewed in terms of social conscience-pricking and not, as later Soviet writers have chosen to consider it, as an overtly political statement.⁵⁷ Such an approach is more clearly reflected in Myasoyedov's *The Zemstvo Dines* (1872, Ill. 33) which depicts a group of peasants partaking of a meagre repast, during a sessional break of the local council on which they serve. The inequality and ineffectualness of this political institution, ushered in by the reforms of the 1860s, is clearly portrayed in the dejected mien of the men, whilst the difference in social standing between the peasants and the other, unseen participants, is expressed through contrast. The peasants, clothed in rags, sit on the courtyard floor eating their paltry meal in the company of a few chickens, whilst through the window one glimpses a waiter attending to the dishes and silverware from which the more prosperous zemstvo members dine. Though less heavy-handed, this contrast is close in spirit to the *Burlaki* as Repin originally planned it, with its comparison with the holiday makers on the Neva.

A further consideration on *Burlaki* as modern history, actuality as Stasov would have it, is prompted by claims of idealism. It is interesting to note that whilst Courbet's notion of realism was a dispassionate one, a striving for objectivity, Stasov made claim that *Burlaki* was a slice of life, much as one could view throughout Russia, but he did not hesitate to praise subjective elements such as the peasants' nobility and the uplifting gesture of the young hauler. This aspect of the work later assumed heroic proportions as Soviet writers claimed that the haulers constituted part of a general striving by Russian artists to find positive prototypes of the muzhik. This outlook moves away from the specific, to regard realist canvases from

a wider, more profound viewpoint, resulting in claims that Kanin for instance embodies "a human ideal, expressing spiritual beauty and rich simplicity..."⁵⁰ This notion of heroic idealism is directly contrary to realist philosophy, having far more in common with conventional Academic art.

Despite being one of Repin's most aesthetically pleasing works, both in terms of the dramatic, flowing composition, and the *plein air* depiction of searing heat on sand, water and human figures, these aspects were understandably overlooked by all but the most urbane of French writers, whom Stasov promptly dismissed as artistically blind. The ideological content of the work, more ethical than political, was an aspect to which Repin later paid little lip service, though as a young man he was flattered by the interest and praise which Stasov showered upon him and made no move, as he did later with *Tsarevna Sofya*, to counter the critic's reading. *Burlaki*, produced at the outset of Repin's career, proved a harbinger of the many controversies and misunderstandings which bedeviled subsequent canvases and persist still. In later life when he wrote his account of how the painting came into being the emphasis was placed most firmly on his fascination with individual characterisation, a genuine respect for the haulers, and a personal love of painting *alfresco*, away from the constrictions of the Academy and the artificial city life of St. Petersburg. Whether or not these thoughts were paramount to Repin as a young man one can only say for certain that this is how he wished the work to be viewed in the long term.

As Repin's earliest and most spectacular example of scenes from peasant life, *Burlaki* made his reputation and strongly associated him with the genre thereafter. In response he continued to depict the muzhik in many paintings, watercolours and sketches up to the time of his death. It would be impractical to consider other than the most prominent of these, though many need to be mentioned if only briefly.

On his return to Chuguyev from Paris, in October 1876, he again took up rural scenes from his native province. A series of pictures produced during 1877 show a sustained concern for local scenery, types and events. *He Returned* (1877, Ill. 34) depicts a wounded soldier fresh

from the Russo-Turkish War which had broken out earlier that year. He joyfully recounts his adventures to his relatives, showing off his bandaged arm and head. The interior of the peasant izba is spartan, gloomily lit by one small window, with only a few lubki, cheap, popular prints, providing a colourful relief from the generally dark tones. The muzhiks, five men and two women listen with a touch of comic scepticism to their young hero. Repin did not exhibit the picture until the 11th Peredvizhnik of 1883 where it drew very good reviews for its authenticity and patriotism.⁵⁹

Both this and *In a Volost Administration Office* (1877, Ill.35), a crowded interior full of peasant supplicants, show an interest with typicality; the appearance and customs of the scene and of the local types. A tiny, frightened child with its distraught mother in the centre of the volost office provides a reminder of the real distress caused by bribery and corruption at this, the lowest level of tsarist administration, but otherwise the scene is too generalised, and the participants treated with too great a degree of caricature, for the painting to be considered as more than genre. Repin was alive to the political events happening in the countryside at this time, especially the populist 'move to the people', and the harsher side of life in the late 1870s was reflected in his painting *Under the Guard* (Ill.53). The general tone of his paintings in Chuguyev however show a wider concern and interest for peasant life than mere tendentiousness.⁶⁰

The legacy of France can be observed in many uneventful works from Chuguyev. *A Farmhouse in the Ukraine* (Russian Museum, 1877) is a small, unassuming rural view, one of many topographical works executed in the same vein as the earlier views of Montmartre. A number of peasant portraits of this period, well observed, individual locals, depicted with their foibles intact, are also evidence of a more detached but nevertheless keen fascination with the muzhik as a purely independent subject. *An Old Man from Chuguyev*, *A Young Lad of Mokhnachi*, and a charming watercolour of some peasant children sitting bird-like on a fence, are all examples of a relaxed consideration of rural existence.⁶¹

The best known of Repin's peasant portraits are two studies in oils, *Peasant with an Evil Eye* (1877, Ill.36) and *A Cautious One*

(1877, Ill.37). Both are executed with less freedom and spontaneity than the previous works, being carefully posed and painted in monotonous brown hues, but they are important for their sympathetic and serious treatment of ostensibly unimportant subjects. Though both are clearly specific individuals⁶² their anonymity was regarded by some as signifying the artist's search for typicality or, as the most commonly used phrase had it, 'types'. The objectivity of both figures and the uncompromising confrontation which the viewer is forced into, is close in spirit to Kramskoy's *Woodsmen* (1874, Ill.38) displayed at the fourth Peredvizhnik exhibition, bearing the same integrity and even, in this instance, the artist's acknowledged attempt to depict: "...one of those types...who understand much about social and political institutions".⁶³ This positive aspect, the depiction of a strong, confident individual, and the knowledge of his profession, which gives a reference point from which to regard him, affords the viewer at least some relief from uncertainty, whilst the titles of Repin's portraits give only a clue to individual traits; timidity or slyness, rural superstition coexisting with orthodoxy. Their identities remain secondary to their type, their universal or at least, national aspect, and it was on this basis that Stasov praised them most highly in his review of the 6th Peredvizhnik of 1878.⁶⁴ The bulk of his review was, however, reserved for a work which he felt worked on a similar level but with infinitely greater success, *The Archdeacon* (1877, Ill.39).

The Archdeacon

The person depicted here was one well known to the inhabitants of Chuguyev. Ivan Ulanov was archdeacon of their cathedral and by all accounts a notable character, a great drinker, a man of good humour and boundless energy who had never been as far as St. Petersburg, preferring instead the contentment of his rural diocese.⁶⁵ By the time *The Archdeacon* was exhibited in 1878 Repin had been living permanently in Moscow for some months, having moved there in September of the previous year. The painting however was solidly grounded in Chuguyev.

Repin described the solid, pompous and imposing figure of Ulanov as

being just as it appeared to him, a transference to canvas of living actuality, though he went on to designate him a "type" and an "extract", emphasising an intention to depict the embodiment of the genus archdeacon,⁶⁶ typifying a breed:

"...who have not one iota of spirituality - all flesh and blood...our deacons are the last echo of the pagan priesthood, still Slavonic, and this is how I have always regarded my dear deacon - as the most typical, the most fearful of all deacons."⁶⁷

Whether or not Repin attributed these unenviable characteristics to Ulanov personally, as he did to his species in general, is not clear, but he does signify his intention to depict something beyond the individual, to capture and summarise in one canvas an archetype. The nature of this ambitious undertaking is confirmed by correspondence with Tretyakov who, whilst negotiating its purchase referred to the work as a study, to which Repin replied: "You wrongly call the portrait of the deacon a study, it is even more than a portrait - it is a type, in a word, it is a painting."⁶⁸ The hierarchic nomenclature employed by the Academy still retained a powerful hold over artistic matters and whilst Repin was happy to exhibit *A Cautious One* under the label of a study (э́тюд) and to see a minor genre painting such as *He Returned* publically reviewed in the same light,⁶⁹ he was not willing to deny *The Archdeacon* the serious pretensions and profound content which were the reserve of the fully fledged canvas, the "painting" as he pronounced it.

The experiences of Repin's childhood allowed him no delusions about the rapacious and venal nature of the rural clergy, and it is hardly surprising therefore that *The Archdeacon* is painted with scant respect for his office. The insistence on bodily size and presence, the emphasis on corporeality where one should expect spirituality, constituted so unflattering a portrait of a servant of the Church, one of the pillars of autocracy, that it was considered unfit for foreign consumption. In Russia the 'type' was instantly recognised, but when the commissioners in charge of the Russian pavillion at the 1878 Paris Universal Exposition selected *The Archdeacon* for exhibition, Grand Duke Vladimir, the Academy's President, intervened on the grounds that

it was an inappropriate image with which to acquaint the French with the Russian clergy.⁷⁰

It is interesting at this juncture to consider what Repin's motives were in breaking with the Academy and petitioning Kramskoy for membership of the Peredvizhniki. In October of 1877 he decided not to send any works to the next Peredvizhnik exhibition as a mark of respect and conciliation towards the Academy,⁷¹ yet in February of the following year, nearly a month before *The Archdeacon* was rejected for the Paris Exposition, Repin asked Kramskoy if, conditional on its refusal by the commissioners, the work could be included in the forthcoming Peredvizhnik show. In the same breath he went on formally to request membership of the Society.⁷² Since *The Archdeacon* had already been exhibited at the Academy the request was technically in violation of the Peredvizhnik statutes, which stated that paintings had to be intended specifically for the exhibition in which they appeared and be hitherto unknown to the public.⁷³ Kramskoy however was only too pleased to take up the offer and the ensuing correspondence between the two artists suggests both were delighted when *The Archdeacon* was turned down for Paris.⁷⁴ Whether or not Repin was aware of the approaching denouement he does appear to have hedged his bets and one wonders how his relationship with the Peredvizhniki would have developed had *The Archdeacon* been included in the Paris Exposition.

Stasov, with an audible sigh of relief, greeted *The Archdeacon* as an artistic rejuvenation and a triumphant mark of Repin's return to the native fold. In a review of unstinting praise he lauded not only the depiction of "one of the most genuine, profoundly national Russian types, like 'Varlaam' from Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*", but paid homage to the vibrant, passionate execution of the portrait, quoting Kramskoy that Repin painted "as if in a frenzy".⁷⁵ In 1879 Stasov repeated his praises when castigating the artifice of *Tsarevna Sofya*:

"Thinking on Repin's great *Deacon* of last year one asks when will he return to his proper business and give us another real creation... Word reaches us that there is an unfinished painting in his studio, *Religious Procession*, and that last year's *Deacon* was only one of the studies for this painting. Ask yourselves, what an artistic creation for which there exists such studies will be like - a masterpiece!"⁷⁶

Musorgsky, who had first suggested the comparison between *The Archdeacon* and Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, joined the chorus of approval:

"I saw *The Archdeacon* created by our famous Ilya Repin. This painting represents a veritable volcano. The eyes of Varlaam follow the spectator incessantly. What a terrifying sweep of the brush, what abundant breadth!"⁷⁷

The style and execution of *The Archdeacon*, as well as *Peasant with an Evil Eye* and *A Cautious One*, are free of the vestiges of Parisian influence that persisted in Repin's less formal compositions of this time, and Stasov pointed to precedents in 17th century Dutch art, Rubens and Rembrandt particularly.⁷⁸ In all three paintings Repin combines anonymous titles with vacant backgrounds and neutral colours to focus attention solely on the sitter. The handling of the paint, impasted and applied in a vigorous manner, renders Stasov's comparisons most apt. Repin however was not single-minded enough to pursue further the direction in which these works were leading him and it was to be some years yet before Stasov's prediction, that these 'studies' heralded the birth of a masterpiece, was realised. Repin did not abandon depicting the contemporary scene but he was side-tracked by numerous portrait commissions, as well as work on *Tsarevna Sofya*, *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, and *Minin's Call to Nizhni Novgorod*.

Examination in a Village School (1878-1879)

One other work of interest came out of Repin's sojourn in Chuguyev, though it was not completed until he and his family were established in Moscow, and was exhibited only thirteen years later. *Examination in a Village School* (1877-1878, Ill. 40) is mentioned only briefly as a work in progress early in 1878.⁷⁹ Kramskoy suggested that the typicality of the theme held promise,⁸⁰ but thereafter the subject was dropped in favour of *The Archdeacon*.

On first sight the painting, which remained unfinished, appears to be a lively piece of genre. The examiner, an inspector of national schools, sits behind a desk at the head of a village class, a priest by his side, and stares with displeasure at the young pupil standing

in front of him. A paper in the inspector's hand suggests he is testing the boy and clearly not getting the desired responses. The priest talks to the inspector in an agitated manner, gesticulating at the boy apologetically, whilst the class of village urchins regard the lone pupil's ordeal with a mixture of apprehension, apathy and delight. What makes this piece of competent but unprepossessing painting of particular interest is the teacher standing at the blackboard, scrutinising the inspector with a look of disapproval. This figure closely resembles studies of a young student at the St. Petersburg University, Nikolai Ventsel, whom Repin used as a model for the apprehended populist in his painting *Arrest of a Propagandist*.²¹

It has been suggested that Repin regarded *Examination in a Village School* as one of his first depictions of revolutionaries, and in this context it was included in his one man show of 1891.²² The populist question was much to the fore during the late 1870s, and early in 1878, when Repin made his first sketch for *Arrest of a Propagandist* and worked on *Examination in a Village School*, a celebrated mass trial of revolutionary propagandists, the so-called 'trial of the 193', drew to its predictable close of harsh sentencing. Whether Repin used Ventsel merely as the model for both pictures, or whether he intended to develop *Examination in a Village School* along the theme of populist activity in rural Russia, his letters give no hint. The ambiguity of the study therefore lends itself to both a genristic and a political reading. Though the slightly comic characterisations of the inspector and the priest are clearly disrespectful, one is inclined to the former viewpoint by virtue of the animated nature of the scene, especially the prominence and liveliness of the peasant children.

During his years of residency in Moscow (1877-1882) Repin was a frequent visitor to Mamontov's estate Abramtsevo where he began work on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* and carried out research for *Tsarevna Sofya*. Removed from Moscow he again turned to small, uneventful records of daily life on the estate, such as *A Stroll with Lanterns* (Abramtsevo, 1879), *Abramtsevo* (Polenovo, 1880),²³ and one of his most simple and effective outdoor paintings *On a Park Bridge* (1879,

Ill. 41). He even allowed himself the rare indulgence of straightforward still lifes,⁸⁴ and continued his practise of rural perambulations, painting and sketching the Abramtsevo environs. A sense of freedom and relief at being amongst ordinary, uncomplicated villagers, is expressed in a letter to Stasov:

"The whole family and I have been living with the Mamontovs at Abramtsevo for a month now; life here is easy, pleasant and not at all dull. The air is wonderful, and there are all manner of entertainments, both physical and spiritual...but most importantly the villages are close, where peasants, from young children to old men and women, do not avoid me but pose willingly..."⁸⁵

Out of these artistic tours, and especially studies at the nearby village of Repikhovo, came a large and detailed canvas on the peasant's liability for military service, *Seeing Off a Recruit* (1879, Ill. 42).

Seeing Off a Recruit

Despite its size, and the obvious effort expended on this painting, Repin makes almost no mention of it. After appearing at the Academy's exhibition of 1880 it disappeared, like *Burlaki*, into Grand Duke Vladimir's collection, and was seen thereafter on only a few occasions until its transference to the Russian Museum in 1918.⁸⁶

In the same year that he started this canvas Repin painted a small work on a related theme, this time of a recruit returning home after his military service, *Going Home. A Hero of the Last War* (1878, Ill. 43). The difference between this laconic composition, with its solitary figure set against a bare, frosty landscape and cloudless sky, and the sunny, crowded, *Seeing Off a Recruit*, could hardly be more pronounced.

Repin made a number of studies for *Seeing Off a Recruit*, the earliest being a pencil sketch of 1879 showing the peasant courtyard. A small oil study of the ramshackle yard showing the disposition of sunlight from the open roof on the interior was also made the same year, and as late as 1947 a number of preparatory works were found in Czechoslovakia.⁸⁷

Despite the strong narrative of the scene the studies show a

primary interest in rendering the fall of bright sunlight on the objects and figures, and to capture the still luminous but diffused light in the shadows. A rough oil study of the central group (Tretyakov Gallery, 1879) which is almost abstract in character, is clearly concerned only with defining tonal relationships.⁸⁸

The finished work depicts the leave-taking of a resigned and pensive recruit, tenderly comforting his wife. The recruit's family look on, his mother with obvious trepidation and his father, seen only from the rear, with restraint. A small child stands crying behind her mother. The warmth and intimacy of the group are enhanced by the brilliant sunlight and the tight circular composition, though the optimism of the day, bright and airy, contrasts with the sad scene.

The quiet dignity of *Seeing Off a Recruit* suggests Repin considered this a serious subject and that he was sympathetic towards the plight of those involved. The strength that is inherent in the picture's reserve, and in the gravitas of its participants, was generally ignored however. The cosiness of the scene and the traditional arrangement of the figures in tight, separate groupings, was seen as an echo of early 19th century art with its patriarchal and sentimental attitude towards the peasantry.⁸⁹ Stasov ranked it with *Tsarevna Sofya* as one of Repin's weakest paintings:

"Repin touched a sentimental and pathetic note entirely alien to his nature and so it did not succeed. Each face and pose suggests devices and conventional groupings. The recruit himself, embracing his wife, is done to order and looks somewhere beyond his wife. The old man to the left and the peasant to the right are positioned completely in parenthesis and in line: the dog is there just to fill in a space, and the mother and soldier only according to the programme, not representing types or expressions, and so it is unsatisfactory. The wife alone is done in a pose showing feeling, nature and life..."⁹⁰

As usual Stasov paid handsome tribute to technique, this time with good cause. The overall treatment is picturesque, but the purely aesthetic considerations of light and colour are particularly overt: the bright, light, *plein air* courtyard, the patches of sunlight which pick out various details, from the horse's hind quarters, to the small boy in the cart, and the delicate pink and white tones of the weeping

wife, even the brilliant strands of straw which litter the courtyard floor, are all carefully but casually part of a harmonious colouration. Like *The Archdeacon* it is painted in a broad, free manner with sweeping, dynamic brushstrokes. A watercolour study for the painting, *Two Women* (Russian Museum, 1878), depicting an elderly woman supporting a despairing, weeping peasant girl, is evidence, despite the emotional scene, of the artist's affection for delicate, sensitive colour combinations.⁹¹

Sympathy is the painting's key note, but in view of the harshness which underpinned the practise of conscription it is not difficult to understand how charges of sentimentality arose. It has been suggested that the peasants "treated induction as a sentence of death",⁹² a fact reflected in the memoirs of Alexander Herzen:

"...compulsory enlistment in the Army...was intensely dreaded by all the young men-servants. They preferred to remain serfs, without family or kin, rather than carry the knapsack for twenty years. I was strongly affected by those horrible scenes: at the summons of the landowner, a file of military police would appear like thieves in the night and seize their victim without warning; the bailiff would explain that the master had given orders the night before for the man to be sent to the recruiting office; and then the victim through his tears, tried to strike an attitude, while the women wept..."⁹³

Herzen describes a scene some decades before the event in Repin's picture and by the mid 1870s universal military service replaced the practise of recruiting exclusively from the two lowest estates. The term of conscription was also reduced, *de facto*, to fifteen years, though this hardly made it more palatable. It is most likely that *Seeing Off a Recruit* depicts a young peasant being called up for a particular campaign, the Russo-Turkish War of 1876-1878, though the distraught condition of the recruit's wife and the mute despair of those about him leaves room for doubt, and a contemporary audience would have had little trouble in identifying the scene with the long-standing social abuse of arbitrary peasant conscription. However, the underlying inhumanity of that institution is confronted only through an understanding of the unhappiness it causes and, to Stasov's obvious regret, was not treated in a more robust and condemnatory manner.

Vechornitsy

Also on Repin's easel during his Moscow period was another large composition on peasant life, though of a more lively and optimistic nature. *Vechornitsy* (1881, Ill. 44) was conceived, and for the most part painted, during a visit to Tarnovsky's Ukrainian estate, Kachenovka, in the summer of 1880, whilst Repin and Serov were collecting materials for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*.⁹⁴ On his return to Moscow in October Repin became acquainted with Tolstoy, who visited his studio and who, though he was most complimentary about many of the works he saw, was particularly attracted to this. Repin was impressed, indeed overwhelmed, by Tolstoy's presence, though he was perplexed at his choice since it was still unfinished and was a relatively minor work by comparison with *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* and *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, both of which Tolstoy saw in progress.⁹⁵

Despite the same lack of profundity of thought that caused Tolstoy to label *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* a study, the scene, a lively party of Ukrainian peasants gathering to while away a long, tedious winter's evening, is a warm, sympathetic and positive portrayal of ordinary peasants, vivaciously enjoying the innocent pursuits of song and dance in a humble but homely interior. It is close in spirit to Tolstoy's own conception of the simplicity and integrity of peasant life, and these facets doubtlessly attracted him to the work.

The zest and vibrancy of the peasant dance is reflected in the very rough handling of paint which is applied thickly and dryly, producing a raised texture in many areas which, in catching the light, helps to convey the warmth and intimacy of the crowded izba. The tonal range is severely limited, consisting almost completely of brown hues, even in the illuminated areas. Though this accurately conveys the dull interior lighting, it has rendered the work one of the most consistent casualties of bad reproduction, and the many, varied and interesting details of character, costume, and interior features are usually lost. The composition too is unusual, with the squatting, animated figure of the dancing peasant turning his back on the viewer, much like the bald Cossack in the final composition for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, creating

the impression of a scene candidly observed.

Nowhere else did Repin paint such a carefree, positive and optimistic view of peasant life on such a scale, but the ingenuous nature of the canvas, totally lacking in extraneous concerns or underlying motives, has made it less interesting, and therefore less considered, by successive generations of critics.

Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk

Alongside *Burlaki* the large painting *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* (1880-1883, Ill. 47) ranks as Repin's most important work in the peasant genre. The scale and scope of this canvas however was opened out, to form a panorama of contemporary classes and types, reflecting a much broader social spectrum.

The development of the painting took place between 1880-1883 but Repin earlier worked fastidiously on a number of variants, the evolution of which is not made clear by his letters. These variants, all different in character, are a valuable record of how Repin's attitude towards the painting changed between the first studies in Chuguyev in 1877 and the finished work exhibited six years later. During these years he makes references to a number of compositions, possibly separate works or alternative titles for the same projects. The confusion is perpetuated by Soviet commentators who give varying titles to different works with little consistency.⁹⁶

The titles, which are at least finite, are *Religious Procession*, *The Miracle-working Icon*, *Showing the Icon*, and *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*. *Showing the Icon*, a general title which could fit any of the variants, has been attached over the years to all of them, and so I have chosen not to use it in relation to any single work. *Religious Procession*, a simple, laconic title, seems most readily to fit the first variant (1877, Ill. 45). *The Miracle-working Icon* is referred to in a letter of 1877 as depicting a crowd moving through a sleepy forest.⁹⁷ This clearly connects it, in conception at least, with *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*, so possibly these are the same work, or at least derivative of each other. In this respect I have decided to treat all studies depicting a foliate background as pertaining, in some way, to *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*

(1877-1924?, Ill. 46).

Religious Procession, conceived and executed in Chuguyev, is a simple, frieze-like composition, led by three well-attired clerics.⁹⁸ The monotonous flat landscape and neutral coloured sky, suggest no particular time or place and the frenzied pilgrims who try to touch the miraculous icon suggest a mediaeval, pagan element. This is toned down in *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, but the ubiquity and timelessness of these scenes is vividly described in Alexander Benois' childhood memoirs:

"A number of pious people had tried to pass or crawl under the image of the Virgin... Suddenly there was a shriek and several strong men pushed their way to the icon, dragging an hysterical woman who was struggling and shouting violently. In spite of her resistance she was thrown on the pavement and held there, so that the icon in passing could have its miraculous effect... Such scenes occurred many times that day along the route of the procession."⁹⁹

Religious Procession in an Oak Forest is much closer in conception to *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, allowing a consideration of different classes. The disorderly mêlée of raised sticks and wild grimaces is replaced by the leisurely progress of the crowd through a sun-dappled wood, the broken and diffused sunlight falling on foliage, vestments, banners, artefacts and the pilgrims' ragged costumes. Repin's concern for this aspect is seen in a bright oil study of 1878 (Tretyakov Gallery).¹⁰⁰

The crowd in *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest* is greatly increased, and the diagonal forward motion of the composition is close to the finished form of *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*. The imposing figure of Ivan Ulanov, the archdeacon of Chuguyev, dominates the foreground, closely followed by a weather-beaten old pilgrim and some well dressed townsfolk, though the mixture of social ranks is not yet fully developed. *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest* occupied Repin for very many years and there are several references to it in his later correspondence when he re-worked and eventually re-painted it, with detrimental results.¹⁰¹ According to Repin's biographer, Igor Grabar, this was done in 1916, which makes it possible that the illustration used here no longer exists, but is

underneath the repainted work.¹⁰² Both variants are, however, clearly closer in realisation to *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* than the first work of 1877, showing an intention to draw in a wider cross section of social classes and to extend the scope of the procession to that of a major religious and cultural event.

In early July, 1881, Repin visited Kursk province to reacquaint himself with the people and terrain which had first suggested the subject in 1876, and to see for himself a celebrated religious procession which, he hoped, would provide fresh impetus for his painting.¹⁰³ One aspect of this trip, not new to him, but which he had clearly forgotten during the intervening years, was the wanton deforestation of this once fertile region, exacerbating the perennial problem of drought, producing dusty, desolate landscapes. In 1876 Repin had written:

"The stillness here is really fabulous, an amazing 'kingdom of sleep'... Only the exploiters of the land are not sleeping, the kulaks! They have cut down my beloved woods, so full of childhood memories."¹⁰⁴

The rediscovery of this scandal resulted in a pertinent difference between previous studies and the final work. The former emphasis on timeless rural pageantry was now supplanted by a harsh record of an identifiable event in a specific time and place, and the contemporaneity, missing from *Religious Procession*, and not fully developed in *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*, was expressed with greater force and clarity. The wasted landscape in particular was to form an eloquent metaphor on the rural mismanagement which had transformed a one time colourful spectacle, into a desperate appeal for miraculous relief. Amongst Repin's studies from this period is a small oil sketch, *Summer Landscape in the Province of Kursk* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1881), depicting a pitifully bald landscape of tree stumps and scrub under a blazing sky: to all intents a desert.

Much work on the painting was undertaken during visits to Abramtsevo. In the neighbouring village of Khotkovo Repin found many of the individual types he wanted for the scene, including the hunchbacked peasant, who strides purposely towards the miracle-working

icon.¹⁰⁵ Repin made many studies for the latter, a key figure in the finished painting, including a watercolour of 1880 (Tretyakov Gallery), a full-length pencil sketch of 1882 (Russian Museum), and a finished oil portrait of 1881 (Tretyakov Gallery).

Despite working solidly on the painting it was not completed until 1883, when Repin was once more living in St. Petersburg, a move he felt necessary to sustain his artistic progress.¹⁰⁶ It was here that *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* was first shown at the eleventh Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1883. Though the painting was the subject of some scathing receptions it formed the centre of attraction and the artist A. A. Kiselev attributed the huge number of visitors to the exhibition, 4000 in one week, almost entirely to its presence.¹⁰⁷ The controversy which surrounded the canvas was concerned not just with the usual investigations into the artist's social stance, but was also pursued on a purely artistic level, the debate turning on whether Repin was guilty of ignoring the canons of fine art by imbuing his figures with an intentional ugliness. Before discussing these reactions it might be beneficial to consider just who are the players in this particularly large, heavily populated work.

The righthand side of the picture is occupied by the large and imposing gilded shrine which houses the miracle-working icon, decked out with flowers and ribbons. Golden offerings in the shape of limbs and organs, hands, feet and hearts, are attached to it, either votively or in supplication. The shrine is carried on the shoulders of a group of muzhiks who are dressed in festive kaftans tied with colourful belts. Behind them are two merchant-class women who gingerly and reverentially carry the empty wooden case which usually encases the icon. Next comes a country choir of young boys martialled by an elderly, balding sexton. According to Stasov this figure, conspicuous in his ragged, old-fashioned uniform of office, is contrasted with the new sexton to the left, wearing a smart frockcoat of European origin and sporting western-style smooth cheeks.¹⁰⁸

Following this first cluster of figures, pointedly divorced from the other participants, is the very dandified priest, clad all in golden vestments, swinging a censer and pushing back his hair with an effete gesture of boredom.

Central to the picture is the small, dumpy figure of a land-owner's wife, representative of the local aristocracy, dressed in yellow silk and bows. With a look of tired complacency she carries the golden icon, which brilliantly reflects the sun's rays. To the right is a figure identified by Stasov as either a tax-farmer or a contractor. This particularly unattractive portrait, pompous and ruddy, possibly dead drunk, is likely one of the despoilers of Repin's beloved woods, and therefore the object of greater enmity. Stasov describes him as: "dressed in a German frockcoat but nevertheless coarse and impertinent, a brazen kulak."¹⁰⁹

To the left of these two stalwarts of rural society is an officious steward who threatens the encroaching pilgrims with his staff. Behind follows a retired official, and then a group of priests in golden raiments, violet skull-caps and kamelaukions, a common form of Orthodox headgear, furiously chatting amongst themselves. This impious group are possibly modelled on an event Repin witnessed near Kiev when he was shocked to see the clergy talking during the procession.¹¹⁰

Whilst the crowd disappear into the heat and dust behind the gold and resplendently coloured ecclesiastical banners, the picture continues on the left with a group of cowed and ragged pilgrims, poor peasants, trudging along in the midday heat. They are headed by the crippled hunchback, the most positive and spiritually imbued figure in the whole painting. He moves resolutely towards the shrine, only to be fended off by the stick of another muzhik, one who clearly knows his place.

The whole scene is presided over by the mounted Cossack militia, sitting high above the crowd. To the right one lashes out at the crowd with great zeal, his wild staring eye echoed by that of his horse which rears up in fear, its mouth foaming. On the far left another Cossack raises his whip in a menacing gesture but refrains from using it. The remaining policemen are stern and imposing, their presence and superior height creating a subtle but pervasive air of menace.

Finally the landscape itself speaks of a barren, forlorn outlook. The foreground consists of yellow, parched earth and is similar in aspect to the desolate sands on which the *Burlaki* pull their burden. The blazing summer sky offers no shade to the unfortunate crowd and

mirrors the bare, comfortless ground below. Between the earth and sky, running behind the procession, is a bald hill. Denuded of its forest, it contains a few brown bushes and a host of bleached and broken tree stumps.

At first sight one is struck by the brightness of the painting, the convincing evocation of summer heat, haze and the cloud of dust thrown up by the vast crowd. On closer inspection the objects of contention become more apparent. The peasants are allowed a degree of dignity, appearing grave, long-suffering or religiously fervent. Only in a few but telling instances are their resigned faces animated to fear, most notably under the knout of the white Cossack as they assume protective gestures and a woman's arm, seemingly detached, appears from out of the crowd raised in self defence. The remaining representatives of *Repin* class and profession, well-fed and well-dressed, are all to a greater or lesser degree presented in an unflattering light: the reverential timidity of the two women carrying an empty case, the foppish priest, the caricatures of the belligerent steward and the contractor, and the crude and blatantly disapproving portrait of the land-owner's wife. According to Repin the chief subject of his painting was not the large shrine containing the miracle-working icon, which dominates the right foreground of the painting, but the small central figure of the lady (барыня) who carries the icon under the guard of a Cossack squadron.¹¹¹

Repin was far from unique in his depiction of the rural peasant's religious observations, and canvases of processions and pilgrims were not uncommon. Myasoyedov exhibited *The Drought* (Omsk Art Gallery, 1878) at the same time as *The Archdeacon* was first shown. It depicts a long file of peasants, kneeling and standing in supplication at an outdoor altar, and also uses a diagonal composition, though the momentum is away from the spectator, and the clergy are shown praying in unison with the congregation, the emphasis directed more to expressing the plight and piety of the participants.¹¹²

Perov, who painted some uncompromisingly realistic character studies of peasant pilgrims,¹¹³ depicted both the severity of their lives as well as the worldly excesses of the clergy. The enigmatically titled *Pilgrim in a Field. On the Way to Eternal Bliss* (Gorky State

Art Museum, 1879) shows the exhausted body of a peasant lying amongst wild grass and flowers, an icon at her side, in stark contrast with the joyous natural scene around her. One might presume she has died of her toil, a fact enhanced by the word-play of the title.¹¹⁴

The social, class-conscious, critical element of Repin's painting differentiates it from those of his peers. In scope it is most closely matched by a number of paintings by I.M. Pryanishnikov, including *The Saviour's Day in the North* (1887) and *The Procession of the Cross* (Russian Museum, 1893), which make use of large, outdoor, processional scenes and imaginative compositions, drawing the viewer into the canvas.¹¹⁵ Despite superficial similarities of subject and treatment Pryanishnikov's works centre around religious unity, and the harmonious integration of his subjects are devoid of the tension Repin creates by subduing the religious content to highlight the earthly haves and have-nots.

What many regarded as the extremism of *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, an open attack on all but the lower orders of Russian society, as well as Repin's departure from conventionally attractive models, offended many commentators and the painting did not want for detractors. Tretyakov, though he purchased the picture for 10,000 roubles, told Repin that he had, regrettably, to agree with an overheard remark that all of the figures were unnaturally and purposefully ugly. With no hint of irony he earnestly advised the artist:

"...in the place of the women carrying the case position a beautiful young girl who would carry the case with faith, rapture even...In general avoid all caricatures and penetrate the faith of the figures, then it will be a truly profound Russian painting!"¹¹⁶

This pertinent observation, that the procession was notably deficient in religiosity, was robustly defended by Repin:

"I cannot agree with the 'artists' conversation' about which you wrote. It is all antiquated, home-made theories and clichés. For me truth is higher than everything. Look at a crowd, wherever you please - will you find many attractive faces? And what is more, you even want them in the foreground. And then look at the pictures of Rembrandt and Velazquez. How many beautiful people

can you count in their pictures?

...In a picture you can only leave in the sort of face which fits the general artistic scheme. It is a subtle feeling which cannot be explained by any theory, and intentional embellishment would have ruined the picture. It is impossible not to sacrifice details for the sake of vividness and the harmonious truth of the whole....A picture is a highly complicated and very difficult thing. You can perceive it only through the concentration of all your inner powers into one feeling, and only at such moments will you sense that above everything else stands truth to life, that it always contains a profound idea and to break it up, especially intentionally, according to some theory of bad artists and narrow-minded scholars, is simply a profanation and a sacrilege."¹¹⁷

Despite this profession that "truth is higher than everything", Repin suggests that the events and individuals portrayed are not necessarily as he saw them at that time, and that immediate accuracy, "details", have been sacrificed in order to present what he considers an objective, more general truth. Thus the work is a broad reflection of Russian society and not a documentary record of a specific event.

Repin's objectivity, however, was another man's tendentiousness, and the painting was positively savaged in the conservative and nationalist press. The critic for *Grazhdanin* wrote: "The instigators and motivators of this trend present a most unhealthy art to the people of Petersburg."¹¹⁸ Another commented cryptically that: "Some ill-starred hands are persistently driving in one direction."¹¹⁹ Repin was accused of doing Russian art "a disastrous disservice"¹²⁰, and Prince Meshchersky, the owner of *Grazhdanin*, commented on "the regretful tendentiousness, and unpleasant mendacity, of the composition of Repin's painting *Religious Procession*...especially the intentionally odd selection of ugly, animal-like and idiotic types". In general he noted "Repin deliberately ruins his talent".¹²¹

In defence of the Peredvizhnik exhibition of the following year Repin complained that the slavish fawning and aesthetic bankruptcy of some critics was, in its own right, a "tendency" detrimental to art. The chief target of this attack was the erstwhile liberal writer and publisher A. S. Suvorin, whose *Novoe vremya* was a trenchantly nationalist organ.¹²² The critical divisions however were not so polarised as to prevent Suvorin from praising *Ivan the Terrible* in the

Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1885.¹²³

Reactionary criticisms were by now meat and drink to Repin but what he found harder to stomach were the adverse judgments of those close to him. In particular he was stung by what he took to be the ingratitude of the young artist Mikhail Vrubel (1856-1910), then a student at the Academy, and in whom Repin took a paternal interest. Essentially these two men, from different generations and backgrounds, should have had little in common: Repin was the son of a peasant, his outlook shaped by the reforming 1860s, whilst Vrubel grew up amongst the noble intelligentsia and his education, during the 1880s, coincided with a period of political extremism which apoliticised many of his contemporaries, who felt that tendency in art undermined formal, purely artistic concerns.

The two first met in the Autumn of 1882 at one of Repin's 'Sundays' where a group of young artists met to work in watercolours. Repin praised Vrubel's and Serov's work¹²⁴ and during an unsatisfactory priod at the Academy advised Vrubel to paint independently of the official curriculum, merely for pleasure, a progressive outlook appreciated by the young artist:

"He has made a great impression upon me: how clear and simple are his views of artistic problems and his methods of preparation for them - so sincere and so little like the idle chatter (which generally engages us so much and which so spoils us and our lives): this, after all, is rigorously and brilliantly reflected in his work."¹²⁵

A controversy over *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* soon altered this idyllic relationship. In April, following a visit to the Peredvizhnik exhibition in the company of some Academy students, where naturally Repin was interested in their reactions to his *magnum opus*, Vrubel wrote that Repin had cooled towards him and that "an atmosphere of love and candidness no longer prevails".¹²⁶ He ascribed this to his own luke-warm reaction to the exhibition, the standard of which he considered low. Vrubel felt that the unsubtle public needed artistic refinement, "subtle gastronomic dishes" instead of the coarse Peredvizhnik "kasha":¹²⁷

"They are essentially right who say that artists cannot exist

without the recognition of the public. But once recognised, the artist does not have to become a slave to the public; he has his own original special business in which he is the better judge. He should respect his work and not destroy its significance to the point that it becomes a tool of journalism. That would be to swindle the public...for me this is roughly what Repin's painting evokes...¹²⁸

That evening Vrubel was at Repin's for a watercolour sitting and remained silent rather than criticise the painting:

"He understood this and was exceedingly cold, at times even irritable. Naturally it was not through injured pride but out of indignation at our aesthetic observations."¹²⁹

It seems easier to credit that Repin's pride was indeed the cause of the rift since Vrubel's comments were not made directly to him. This however was not a negligible slight as the cooling of relationships shows. As one of Russia's most prominent artists Repin doubtlessly felt entitled to some recompense for his patronage of a group of academic students: he had not anticipated a signal that twenty years on from the liberation of the serfs and the students' revolt against the Academy, the Peredvizhnik ethos of political and social awareness held little fascination for the new generation of artists.¹³⁰

Old friends, however, could be relied on, though Stasov found himself hampered by the politically sensitive and reactionary climate that prevailed during the years following Alexander II's assassination. His notoriety for voicing controversial viewpoints also restricted his journalistic outlets. In a short article, ironically published in an organ of the Academy of Arts, he refrained from his usually virulent attacks on Repin's critics, instead concentrating on a detailed account of the content of the painting, comparing it with *Burlaki* for its "fervour, truth, profound nationalism and astounding talent," and concluding: "It is one of the best works of contemporary art."¹³¹ Even this was too much for A.I. Somov, the journal's editor, as was Stasov's dwelling on the inherent violence of the social system, embodied in the local police force:

"...an evil Cossack, a soldier, an expert of course, is

diligently going about his business, savagely whipping the crowd and pulling up his horse's head with a convulsive movement of his left hand. And it is all needless, pointless: it is done simply out of zeal."¹³²

The extreme sensitivity of the journalistic and artistic spheres at this time is reflected in the fact that Somov not only re-reviewed the exhibition personally, in the next issue, but rebuked Stasov in an editorial disassociating the journal from his views.¹³³ *Novoe vremya* joined the attack on Stasov: "Apparently both the painter of the picture and the writer of the article concur in their views on Russian life...and both reveal only how base their views are."¹³⁴

Reviews from a predominantly conservative press were predictably negative, both about tendentiousness and wilful artistic ugliness.¹³⁵ Only Tolstoy, it seems, who thought the work highly accomplished, differed from all else by considering that Repin had taken a neutral stance.¹³⁶

The painterly skill with which Repin created this epic on rural Russia was its saving grace for a succeeding generation of artists, more occupied by formal concerns. Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942) recorded on Repin's death that *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* had been widely anticipated, celebrated and deemed an "enormous success", though characteristically he had more time for the aesthetic aspects of the work:

"Life bursts forth from the painting, the sun radiates, its light floods the huge moving crowd. There is evidently some deliberate tendentiousness, but this is just the 'salt' without which it was impossible to make do in those years."¹³⁷

Benois too, whilst condemning the social sermonising of the picture, was greatly impressed by its *plein air* atmosphere.¹³⁸ Even some of the most severe critics could not deny its successful evocation of the fervid, sun-baked Russian countryside. Indeed one writer complained that the extraordinarily fine technical accomplishment only made the selection of such an execrable content more lamentable.¹³⁹

There is little doubt when viewing the work, and taking into account the variants with which he toyed, that Repin was greatly

exercised by aesthetic and compositional aspects. As he pointed out to Tretyakov, the overall harmony of the painting was more important to him than any of its individual parts. But at the same time the character and the composition underwent radical changes, from an initially generalised form to one which accommodated ever more and varied representatives of Russia's social caste system. The setting was transferred to a bleaker terrain and the composition passed from a frieze-like motif, to a passing parade, eventually to assume the aspect of a dusty, rumbling, human juggernaut, which surrounds and disconcerts the viewer, disappearing out of sight at both edges of the picture to perpetuate the illusion of movement towards and past the spectator.

Formal aspects cannot, however, obscure the accentuated critical content. Even staunch admirers of Repin's work, during his own lifetime, found the contrast between the dishevelled peasants and the aggressive figureheads of Russian law and order, overtly offensive. Rosa Newmarch commented:

" Scores of times I have looked at the picture, and longed to blot out that one discordant note in the harmony of this great chorale of national life, which adds nothing to its truthfulness. For even supposing that Repin actually witnessed the incident, and that it filled him, naturally enough, with fiery indignation, was it worth while to perpetuate it; to paint, coldly and carefully this indelible accusation against a body of brave men?"¹⁴⁰

It has long been the custom in Soviet critiques to regard the work solely as a biting condemnation of inequalities under the autocratic regime, and this has resulted in narrow, but nevertheless uneven appraisals, which consider the work in terms of "the humiliation heaped upon the common folk",¹⁴¹ or at other times, "an assertion of the people's spiritual strength, who have become positive heroes."¹⁴² One might take issue with just how positively Repin expresses the people's heroism, though this motley collection of sun-burned faces, tired bodies, bast shoes and cloth puttees are the only figures imbued with dignity or treated with a degree of humanity. As such the painting constitutes one of Repin's most important, incisive and sympathetic portrayals of the physical harshness and political

marginalisation of the life of the Russian muzhik.

Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk, exhibited the year before *They Did Not Expect Him*, a more overtly political canvas which was greeted with a positive storm of abuse, shows that by the early 1880s Repin was willing to risk official censure and to make plain, on a grand scale, a strength of social criticism which in previous works had been implicit rather than outspoken. Neither was he willing to acquiesce to the tastes of a wealthy and influential patron to override the general harmony, the "truth" of the work, to conform to conventional or clichéd standards. Both decisions were courageous and show a degree of conviction and maturity which mark his best works during the 1880s. As a result the painting, a genuinely popular success with the public both then and now, has long been regarded as a great national work of art, a secular icon and an accurate mirror of post reform Russia. It is ironic to consider, however, that when the painting was first exhibited the unsubtle social contrasts which Repin so successfully avoided with *Burlaki*, then diverted the attention of the critics away from the plight of the suffering masses, to an urgent consideration of the indignity heaped upon the representatives of Russian officialdom.

Repin's treatment of contemporary themes

Repin did not strictly confine himself to peasant themes when depicting the contemporary scene, as the following chapter will consider. However, there is an insufficient body of work to suggest that, his political subjects aside, he approached any other single theme with the same commitment. It is hardly surprising, given that around 77% of the populace were of peasant status, that a democratic pictorial record of 19th century Russia should be preoccupied with the lives of this overwhelming majority.

Outside of this genre Repin's treatment of contemporary scenes are few and, notably, executed on a small scale or in inferior media. These include *A Railway Watchman* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1882), a small oil work of a scene at Khotkovo, where he worked on *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*. This dispassionate, objective record, of a lone peasant standing by a railway bridge under an

atmospheric, leaden sky, makes no suggestion of how the industrialisation of the countryside was effecting traditional ways of life. Instead, the empty track, which vanishes into the horizon, and the solitary watchman, clearly with very little to watch, suggests a sleepy backwater, bypassed even by modern technical advancements.

The lives of urban peasants were barely touched upon. The seamstress, a common 19th century subject made popular by Thomas Hood's poem *The Song of the Shirt*, became a byword in European painting for physical suffering and capitalist exploitation,¹⁴³ but for Repin produced only a relaxed pencil study (Ill. 48, 1882), devoid of critical content or a hint of personal suffering.

It is perhaps instructive to consider which subjects Repin did not tackle in his pursuit of truth to life. He generally avoided, for instance, pessimism, defeatism, or brutally direct depictions of the crushing hardships and humiliations of peasant life. Even *Burlaki*, despite its exposure of a degrading existence, is conceived with sympathy, allowing the barge-haulers a modicum of integrity. This contrasts with bleaker, more uncompromising works such as Maksimov's *The Sick Husband* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1881), which shows a despairing wife praying over the body of her husband, stretched out under the icons in a corner of their spartan izba: a graphic and pitiful reminder of the woman's complete dependency on his well-being.¹⁴⁴

A particularly unflinching exponent of peasant hardship was Sergei Ivanov, a painter who revived the flagging commitment of Peredvizhnik canvases during the 1890s with a series of canvases on the dilemma of the migrant peasant, which he observed from experience. The need for land, caused by the rural overpopulation of European Russia, resulted in many uncertain and hazardous eastwardly migrations, the subjects of *Migrant Woman in a Railway Coach* (1886), *Migrants Returning Home* (1888) and *Death of a Migrant Peasant* (1889, Ill. 49). The latter two pictures, set against backdrops of barren, parched landscapes, show the bitter consequences of failure, the collapse of all hope. *Death of a Migrant Peasant*, with even greater severity than Maksimov's painting, exposes the utter desolation of the dead man's wife and her as yet uncomprehending child. The mood of the painting is pure despair: this is quite literally the end of the line.

Repin did not allow his paintings to fall into despondency, nor did he dwell on the humiliations of the peasant's life, as did other artists. I. P. Bogdanov's *Reckoning Up* (1890)¹⁴⁵ shows a humble, apologetic peasant, his head bowed, being rebuked by a complacent couple, seated by their samovar, for falling into arrears. N. Kuznetsov's *Inspecting His Estate* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1879), a much earlier work, takes a tougher line by showing the cowering peasant being angrily threatened with his master's whip. Their relationship is underscored by the peasant's dog which rolls submissively on the floor, the whites of its eyes showing in fear, as the land-owner's dog advances on it aggressively. The bite of such paintings, which here borders on overstatement, could too easily fall into sensationalism, as in A. A. Shevchenko's *The Landlord Exchanging Peasants for Dogs*, which requires little elucidation.¹⁴⁶

Whatever the inclinations of the artist there were still limits of good taste which were simply not transgressable, and one searches in vain for a pictorial condemnation of the hideous murders, rapings, burnings and mutilations of the pogroms which were a regular feature of tsarist Russia.¹⁴⁷ Other subjects, less brutal but equally distressing, such as the serious, frequent and widespread instances of famine, were also skirted. Serov's *Hunger* (Ashmolean Museum, 1890s), a ragged, expressive sketch, is virtually unique in this respect. Amongst Repin's works is a sketch entitled *Starving. Boy with a Piece of Bread* (1908, Ill. 50) though it is not clear to what this specifically relates. Judging from contemporary photos of famine victims in Russia this boy looks relatively well fed and the title may simply relate to the general malnutrition which accompanied the peasant way of life.

Repin was not adverse to tackling the darker side of the muzhik's life, but it is significant that he confined this to the less prestigious sphere of graphic art, and not to large works in oils. The unsavoury subject of venereal disease featured in the design for a book jacket by the surgeon V. K. Trutovskaya, *The Evil Disease, or Syphilis*, for which he depicted a woman without a nose, victim of the dreaded contagion.¹⁴⁸ Tolstoy was so impressed by this vignette that he asked Repin if he would contribute three pictures to some

publications he was editing on the evils of drink, requesting: "Choose the subjects of all three yourself, but make them as terrible, powerful and directly relevant to the subject as your picture on syphilis."¹⁴⁹ Though the venture took longer than both anticipated, Repin took Tolstoy at his word and produced a quite horrific and squalid illustration, *The Drunken Father* (1888, Ill.51), depicting the return of a dishevelled peasant to a terrified household of emaciated figures: his wife, an elderly woman, a young boy and a tiny baby. Those who are able make pitiful attempts to hide themselves from the club-wielding apparition whilst the baby, lying naked and vulnerable on top of the stove, increases the awful tension of the scene.¹⁵⁰

Repin returned to this theme in 1899 when illustrating Chekhov's *Peasants*, a short story about the disillusionment of a muzhik in ill health, who returns from Moscow to his native village, only to find it a barbaric and fearful place, populated by wild, drunken animals, prey to all manner of vice, cruelty and disease. Chekhov vividly describes the family's dark, crowded and filthy hut, black with soot and flies, and how every occasion is made the excuse for drunken sprees ending, invariably, in bouts of domestic violence. Repin did a number of studies for the story depicting the drunken Kiryak, the brother of the central character, beating his wife (1899, Ill.52). Chekhov describes the scene:

"Every single child in the hut burst out crying...There was a drunken coughing, and a tall man with a black beard and a fur cap came into the hut. As his face was not visible in the dim lamplight, he was quite terrifying. It was Kiryak. He went over to his wife, swung his arm and hit her across the face with his fist. She was too stunned to cry out and merely sunk to the ground; the blood immediately gushed from her nose."¹⁵¹

The execution of this and other studies is hurried and coarse, the standard of drawing being not of Repin's best, but the forthright depiction of the violence shows that the artist had no qualms about exposing the darker side of people who, in his oil works, are the centre of sympathetic concern. Nevertheless he confined these, his most powerful, disconsolate depictions, to the graphic media. Only here was he willing to relinquish the image of the peasant's

victimisation, to show instead something of the misery they inflicted upon one another. This can only be a matter of conscious selection since similar scenes were frequently tackled in oils¹⁵² and in life such scenes must have been commonplace. In 1871 a horrified British artist, making a tour of Russia's artistic splendours, observed of St. Petersburg:

"...in no other European capital is drunkenness seen so openly in the public streets. Within the space of a short walk from my hotel in St. Michael's Square I have counted, about the hour of twilight, more than a dozen men and women reeling between the wall and the gutter... spirits, hot as wildfire, are so cheap, that the luxury of getting drunk can be purchased for twopence."¹⁵³

Yaroshenko's *Nevsky Prospekt at Night* (1875), exhibited at the fourth Peredvizhnik exhibition, depicting the wretched existence of people sleeping rough on the streets of the capital, is just such a scene of metropolitan misery.¹⁵⁴ With the exception of a series of illustrations depicting life on that same street, all of which present an image of a bustling, commercially thriving city, Repin seems not to have concerned himself at all with the urban peasant.¹⁵⁵

If Repin's consideration of contemporary Russia seems, superficially, a rather one-sided affair, the figures: 77% of the populace peasants, 70% rural peasants, bear repeating. The primary issue is not that he chose, political themes aside, to concentrate his artistic powers on the lives of rural peasants, but in what light he portrayed them.

It is clear from his many paintings, of which only the best known have been considered here, that Repin did not strive towards a detached, objective depiction of life in post-reform Russia, and that he consciously imbued his works with a personal, emotional input to produce an image of the common people that was broadly humanitarian and sympathetic. His childhood memoirs show good reason why this should be so. Whether or not he distorted this image beyond a degree of acceptable subjectivity is debatable. He was not alone in avoiding the darker, more sinister side of life at the lowest end of the social scale (artists after all required patrons), though it is evident that

he was selective in the scale and media with which he tackled certain, less acceptable subjects. *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, for instance, contains none of the beggars and peasants who congregated at the major religious festivals and shrines to wave their hideous afflictions: running sores, physical mutilations or loathsome diseases, in the faces of likely benefactors.¹⁵⁶

But if he did not dwell on the infernal or unseemly side of contemporary life, neither was he romantic or sentimental about it. Despite his exceptionally high regard for Tolstoy, Repin was appalled at the writer's homilies on peasant virtue and attempts to further, rather than change, their traditional modes of existence:

"I cannot accept his negation of culture...At the sight of the inmates of Yasnaya Polyana, in their black, dirty huts with cockroaches, without light, stagnating in the evenings by a kerosene lamp, giving off nothing but stench and soot, I was pained, and could not imagine the possibility of any bright, joyous mood in this Dante's inferno...To descend for one minute into this darkness and to say 'I am with you', is hypocrisy. To wallow with them forever is a senseless sacrifice. To elevate them! To elevate them to one's own level, to give life - this is a heroic deed!"¹⁵⁷

Repin's prowess in capturing peasant life in a manner which many, often from opposing critical viewpoints, regarded as factual, perhaps too factual for comfort, was the artist's hallmark. However we now regard the severity or benignity of individual canvases, in the eyes of contemporary critics at least, the verisimilitude of his works earned him the reputation of being an uncompromising (or mischievous) documentor of contemporary social ills. Certainly Repin's peers greatly valued his ability in this respect. Despite often sharp divergencies of opinion Tolstoy commented that no other artist could so capture the life of contemporary Russia,¹⁵⁸ and Kramskoy, at the outset of Repin's career, declared:

"Repin has the ability to depict the Russian muzhik just as he is. I know many artists who portray muzhiks, and very well too, but not one of them has even come close to Repin's work."¹⁵⁹

Musorgsky too shared this view. In a letter to Repin he spoke of his desire to represent the people through his work, commenting that:

"Only the masses, huge, unenhanced and unadorned, have true integrity."¹⁶⁰ On these grounds he was much moved by Repin's *Burlaki*, assigning the artist a pre-eminent place in Russian culture as the "shaft-horse" (копённый) of some mighty, national troika, calling himself just an "out-runner" or "trace-horse" (пристяжка).¹⁶¹

"The peasant is the judge now, and we must reproduce his interests."¹⁶² This aphorism of Repin's, a favourite amongst Soviet commentators, has generally been interpreted as a clarion call for acutely political, condemnatory canvases, to redress the social imbalance. The evidence of Repin's paintings, rather than his words, suggests the phrase would be better understood as an identification of the burning social issue; one which seriously-minded, socially committed artists could not ignore. It might as easily be taken as a humanitarian statement as a political one. On balance however, the Soviet view in this matter is not essentially wrong, for the two remained inextricably linked. It would be a very dense or detached spectator who could consider the plight of the barge-hauler independently of the social system that put him there, or, viewing *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, could refrain from reflecting on what twenty years of reform had done for the muzhik.

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CHAPTER 5

Political Paintings

In setting the agenda for contemporary artistic subject matter, the social commentators of the 1860s placed political involvement firmly to the fore. Chernyshevsky, though his dictates were less narrowly prescribed than others, invited consideration of all aspects of life, maintaining that art was a moral activity, the purpose of which was to explain and pass judgment on "everything in reality that is of interest to man - common man".¹ In a country where political freedoms were severely restricted the emphasis on "everything" and "reality" unavoidably ran into the conflict of addressing previously unfronted subjects in an unflinching manner. Dobrolyubov, attacking the *bête noire* of Russian critical writings, German idealism, asked:

"...what exalts art the most - the description of a babbling brook and the contrast of hill and dale, or the presentation of the course of human life and the conflicts of different principles and social interests?"²

The literalness of such utilitarian ethics was easily parodied, as for instance in Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*, where the respective merits of an apple and the Sistine Madonna are debated in favour of the apple.³ But despite their blatantly materialist convictions, this first generation of *raznochinets* critics, who were to influence the nation's art and thought, were far removed from the ends-justifies-the-means school of revolutionaries who evolved into the terrorists of late 19th century Russia. An intense strain of moral outrage went hand in glove with a positive, constructive ethos, as Dobrolyubov put it: "to spread in society a bright outlook, truly noble convictions."⁴

Social inequalities on canvas could be introduced with relative ease, merely by increasing the commitment to the already existing satirical and peasant genres. But to translate the convictions of radical journals, still less the seditious contents of printed and handwritten pamphlets which passed amongst the trusted few, into publically displayed visual material, was a more difficult proposition: artists lived or died by their commissions, which traditionally tied them to a greater degree of conformity than it did

sniping journalists.

A basic requirement for a political work of art was initially an overt confrontation or unflattering comparison involving a representative of the official order, ideally of the forces of law and order, since ridicule of the Orthodox Church, though potentially subversive, was something of a tradition. The formula was not, however, easily defined. An early work, such as Perov's *Arrival of a District Police Officer at an Investigation* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1857), depicting a fettered prisoner being judged by a corpulent, complacent official, attacks only rural despotism at the lowest level and, since the prisoner is only a peasant, the mistreatment of whom was institutionalised, the impact, though not negligible, is mitigated.

Yakobi's celebrated *Prisoner's Halt* (1861, Ill.2), produced only a few years later, is evidence of how much further artists were then willing to commit themselves ideologically. Despite the reassuring figure of the policeman tending an emaciated convict, clearly dying from the forced march, this bold depiction of prisoners trudging through a bleak landscape to their Siberian exile, many doubtless convicted of political crimes, is characteristic of the new robustness of paintings during the 1860s.

An early exponent of political themes was A.N. Shurygin (1841-1873), who forsook the domestic interiors he produced in the early 1860s, but who sadly died young, leaving only a limited body of work. Shurygin had contact with the *Artel* during his student days and in 1868 he sent to the Academy three canvases with the request that he be granted the minimum rank of 'free artist', an action in keeping with the secessionists of 1863. Amongst these works was *Arrest* (Museum of Fine Arts TASSR, 1867), depicting a middle-class revolutionary, his comfortable apartment floor strewn with illicit literature, being separated from his wife and child by two officers. Though the presence of the victim's wife and baby is a sentimental touch, the portrayal of an educated, well-dressed revolutionary in an affluent setting, is a progression in terms of depicting political activity. Due to censorship the painting was exhibited only after the title was changed to *A Contemporary Idealist*,⁵ more redolent of misguided good intentions, but the social standing of the central character still

suggests the serious social inequalities that would drive a respectable figure to such desperate actions.

The figure of the revolutionary eventually became stock in trade of Peredvizhnik exhibitions, but his first tentative appearances on canvas fell far short of what radical critics had sought. Herzen, for instance, called in vain for a pictorial denunciation of Chernyshevsky's 'civil execution', stripping him of all civil rights.⁶ The members of the *Artel* too, though portrayed as politically aware, failed to address the increasingly unsettled contemporary scene in their paintings,⁷ and despite Soviet assertions to the contrary Repin's career toes a familiar line.

According to the artist's memoirs Chernyshevsky and his contemporaries were required reading at the politically informed *Artel* gatherings.⁸ Nevertheless, such an important event as the execution of Karakozov in 1866, would have passed Repin by but for the prompting of his fellow student, Nikolai Murashko.⁹ At the execution, shaken by the senseless violence of the ceremony, Murashko produced a stack of photographs from his pocket, including Chernyshevsky, the Polish liberationist Kosciuszko and other Polish liberationists. Together he, Repin and other students "swore an undying oath to liberation",¹⁰ a subject which nevertheless failed to appear in Repin's repertoire, the sketches done at Karakozov's execution (Ill. 7) remaining an artistic aberration.

Not until the late 1870s, a decade later, when the populist 'movement to the people' was in full flourish in the provinces, did Repin return to the theme with a small oil painting, *Under the Guard. Along the Muddy Road* (1876, Ill. 53), depicting the miserable conveyance of a prisoner through a grey, muddy landscape. The two soldiers who flank him, with sabres drawn, appear to be enjoying the experience no better, as all three sit in the rough cart, their journey made easier only by a coarse bed of straw. Despite the anecdotal nature of the work, both the size and the freedom with which it is painted connect it with his small views of Paris and *On a Turf Seat* (Ill. 20), also produced in 1876. There is little suggestion beyond an obvious sympathy for the prisoner where Repin's allegiances lie. The use of receding telegraph poles to denote distance adds a

touch of rural modernity, anchoring the events firmly in the present, but whilst the subject could be considered political, its simplicity provides no elucidation of the artist's ideology.¹¹

*Arrest of a Propagandist (1880-1892)*¹²

Amongst the welter of canvases which Repin worked on from the late 1870s, and through to the 1890s, the revolutionary question occupied an important place. *Arrest of a Propagandist* (Ill. 54), was Repin's first sustained work attempting to come to grips with the political problems of the populists, many of them intellectuals or students, who earnestly went in their hundreds to enlighten and liberate, only to find themselves rudely rejected by the backward, conservative-minded peasantry.

Repin worked on two versions of the painting which are interesting individual reflections on the evolving populist drama. The first, (Tretyakov Gallery, 1878), sketched and painted when Repin had settled in Moscow, was produced at the same time as *Examination in a Village School*.¹³ It depicts a resolute figure bound to a post in a room crowded with peasants, his suitcase of illegal leaflets scattered about him. Initially it included a police officer at his desk,¹⁴ but this was rejected in the oil version, leaving the propagandist to confront those whom he had come to inform and educate. Bound to the central column the populist invites suggestions of martyrdom, possibly even a scene from the Passion,¹⁵ both of which would be in keeping with the tragic mood of the painting.

At this point the defiance of the populist, the ambiguous reactions of the querulous peasants, and the crowded composition, lessen the later sense of isolation and total rejection. Sketches and an oil painting of 1879 begin the process of divorcing the revolutionary from the peasants, the crowd gradually thinning out to leave him stranded in the centre of the composition.¹⁶ The inclusion of some police officers who busily scrutinise the illegal literature, and the opening up of the canvas to include, in the wings, the triumphant discovery of more papers by a zealous official, all add to the humiliation of the populist. Superficial similarities to the mocking of Christ are enhanced in the oil version of the same year which, in all but a few

details, is identical to the finished work of 1880-1882. Only a handful of peasants remain but they now actively collude with the militia, assisting them to pinion the revolutionary to the stake. A group of conspiratorial elders, almost lost in the dark background, look with a mixture of guilt and complicity at the arrest, presumably playing the role of Judas.¹⁷

At the time Repin began painting, the notorious mass trials of populists, members of Narodnaya volya, had already begun, and in successive sketches and variants he highlighted the tragic division between the propagandists and the peasantry which destroyed the movement as effectively as the mass mobilisation of police. As late as 1892, following his major one man exhibition in St. Petersburg,¹⁸ and after Tretyakov purchased the picture, the artist made a late but telling change to the figure of the sleeping peasant at the rear of the izba, converting him to a mute, but decidedly demonic presence, contemplating the arrest with an air of satisfaction.

"In the painting *Arrest* I have repainted a complete figure, in the far background. In place of the sleeping muzhik...there now sits a local tavern keeper or perhaps a factory worker, looking doggedly at the arrested man. Is he not the informer?"¹⁹

Repin clearly wished to highlight the peasants' decisive role in the failure of the populist movement and, one must surmise, impute to them some of the blame for the increasingly desperate actions of the next wave of revolutionary activity. That he should do so ten years after completing the work, suggests a retrospective understanding of events. The assassination of Alexander II, which proved a political catalyst, resulting in judicial reprisals and political repressions, marked the decline of idealism, as the populists turned to violence, unable to confront the authorities with other than their own methods.

It seems possible that Repin did not fully comprehend the evolving political situation and his letters make virtually no reference to the assassination.²⁰ He would however have been informed of the authenticity of the scene depicted and possibly saw or had first-hand accounts of similar arrests from his time in Chuguyev, or touring the rural environs of Moscow. The same model used for the teacher in *Examination in a Village School*, Nikolai Ventsel, served as one of two

used for *Arrest of a Propagandist*.²¹ Ventsel's autobiography paints a typical picture of young populists during the 1870s: he read Dobrolyubov, Pisarev, and seditious journals such as *The Whistle*, and helped edit another, *Searchlight*, on his way to becoming a skilled, professional revolutionary.²² Such a background placed him in an ideal position to advise Repin on the veracity of the incidents which occur in *Arrest of a Propagandist*.

In common with many political themes, *Arrest of a Propagandist* was not exhibited until long after completion, when such canvases were less of a novelty. Though Repin commented on its success at his exhibition in 1892,²³ it was then seen in company with a large body of works and attracted less attention than the long anticipated *Zaporozhye Cossacks*. Stasov, who found the concept and the composition muddled, urged Repin to try something else,²⁴ and though, as a matter of course, he gave it a good press,²⁵ he did not rank it highly amongst Repin's revolutionary paintings.

However astute was Repin's understanding of the political events underlying *Arrest of a Propagandist*, the spirit of the painting is unmistakable. The refined features of the propagandist, his increasing isolation and humiliation through the various studies, all show a sympathetic attitude for the failed idealism of the practical ideology. The revolutionary as victim, or social martyr, rather than modern Prometheus, was an image which many artists, Repin amongst them, clearly felt more at home with. *Spurning Confession* had already begun this series for Repin, which was to continue with *They Did Not Expect Him*. *Arrest of a Propagandist* was the first of the series to be fully completed (though Repin tampered with it in 1892) and reflects a manifest concern about the futility, possibly even the futility, of kicking against the powerful autocratic system.

Before completion of *Spurning Confession* in 1885 Repin produced three more oil paintings on political themes. *A Secret Meeting* (1883, Ill. 55), depicting a heated, clandestine gathering of members of the Narodnaya volya movement,²⁶ painted on a large scale, suggesting a serious venture, never proceeded beyond a sketchy stage. The paint-work is very loose, with large areas of bare canvas showing through,

most notably in the figure to the right, facing away from the viewer. The hands of the figures around the table are drawn poorly and in haste, and the whole painting has the air of something put down at a furious pace. The scene itself is non-specific; just faces and hands emerging from darkness into the lamplight's glow. Executed just two years after the assassination of Alexander II, the conspiratorial air of the scene, especially the central, demagogic figure, might suggest an element of political fanaticism. It was not exhibited until 1896/97, and then under the tame title, *By Lamplight*.²⁷ In 1924, after the October Revolution, it was exhibited in Moscow, on the occasion of the artist's 80th birthday, as *Meeting of the Nihilists*.²⁸

The secretive, excitable, close atmosphere of the underground meeting is well evoked, whilst the anonymous setting and ambiguous motives of those present give the painting an intriguing air. But Repin at this time was fully occupied with work on *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, after which he embarked on a tour of Europe in the company of Stasov. On his return from Europe he began work on *They Did Not Expect Him* whilst continuing with *Ivan the Terrible*, both major works, and *A Secret Meeting* seems to have been squeezed out by the sheer volume of work in his studio.

The tour of Europe by Stasov and Repin, made in April and May of 1883, occasioned a small work with a political theme, *Annual Meeting in Memory of the French Communards at the Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris*, (1883, Ill.56).²⁹ During these months the two visited major museums and sites of artistic importance in Germany, Holland, Spain, Italy, and France, where Repin renewed a tentative acquaintance with the impressionist style. Although artistic matters occupied the bulk of their time – Repin recorded his renewed appreciation of many of the Western masters³⁰ – the more politically aware, and socially well-connected Stasov, introduced him to other diversions, arranging an introduction with P.L. Lavrov and sundry exiled Russian revolutionaries, and organising visits to socialist meetings.³¹

On the morning of May 15, Repin, in the company of Stasov, attended a political rally and memorial ceremony at the Père-Lachaise cemetery, in honour of the French Communards, shot in 1871. Repin was impressed by the degree of political latitude allowed to the French in this open

manifestation of public opinion, and by the joyous, holiday mood of the large crowd, which gathered with flowers and banners to honour their political heroes.³² He decided, on the spot, to sketch the scene, and the result, though small, is one of his most pleasing paintings. The debt to the impressionist style, hinted at in some of his Parisian works of 1873-1876, is overt in the rapidly sketched, spontaneous brush work and the bright colouration. The huge crowd of republican sympathisers which dominates the foreground, snakes out of sight towards the centre of the canvas, joining the curve of the wall to create the impression of uncountable numbers on so small a canvas. The sense of freedom and unity which Repin recalled is retained, as the crowd raise their salute to the commune and the revolution.³³ This spirit of joyful, mass political participation, is in sharp contrast to the tragic sufferings and gloomy incarcerations of the isolated political figures in Repin's Russian canvases. In style and subject it suggests once more the sense of artistic freedom which Repin enjoyed outside of Russia, away from the expectations of others. This breath of artistic fresh air had a discernible effect on his work, particularly in the treatment of *They Did Not Expect Him*, which was begun in the summer of 1883, directly following his European tour.³⁴

They Did Not Expect Him (1884; 1888)

Of all Repin's major works *They Did Not Expect Him* caused him the greatest personal anguish in trying to perfect the desired image, and certainly earned him the most critical hostility. The picture is a marked change of direction from previous images of revolutionary figures, representing a subtle and far more ambitious attempt to delineate the contemporary political scene.

Preliminary sketches hinted at a small, detailed painting, in the manner of *Arrest of a Propagandist*, with the action well sign-posted. A drawing of 1883 (Russian Museum) shows the figure of the returning exile being ushered in by an elderly man, whose unsubtle gestures and facial motions enhance the surprise of the unsuspecting family.³⁵ At this point the exile's sex was undetermined; two studies, both from the same year, depict a serious, confident, be-spectacled man, and an equally resolute woman.³⁶

The first oil version, completed at Repin's summer cottage in Martyshkino, utilising members of his own family as models, did away with the elderly man to show a stern, dowdy young woman confronting her well-dressed family — *They Did Not Expect Her* (1883; 1898, Ill.57).³⁷ At this point the reactions of her family, and the extraneous information conveyed by various items in the final version, are not developed, though the style of the work, free, painterly and brightly coloured, is already evident.

The choice of a female protagonist was highly topical and it is likely that Repin took his lead from the artist Yaroshenko who had been the subject of controversy with a number of ostensibly innocuous portraits of female students: *Progressivist* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1878), *Kursistka* (1883, Ill.59), and *At the Litovsky Fortress* (1881, location unknown), which depicted a determined student in front of the notorious prison and occasioned the artist's house arrest, a unique event in the annals of Russian art.³⁸ *Kursistka*, a seemingly uncontentious portrait, which was exhibited at the 11th Peredvizhnik exhibition, was regarded by many as a positive depiction of a young woman who, according to one's political viewpoint, was a symbol of enlightened, emancipated youth, in the mould of the co-operative workers portrayed in Chernyshevsky's *Что делать?*, or the cause of discontent and disturbances which swept through the universities after the admittance of women in the early 1860s. The figure was also associated with the populists, many of whom were women, and the term *Kursistka* assumed a pejorative meaning, denoting a progressive activist.³⁹

Repin decided however not to retain the female exile and when the 12th Peredvizhnik exhibition opened in St. Petersburg in February of 1884, the now familiar male revolutionary was in place.

The painting, now on a much larger scale, had lost much of the confidence and determination of the previous sketches. Though speculations on this, the first large version, suggest a consciously tragic portrayal,⁴⁰ seemingly endless technical problems on Repin's part must have contributed greatly to the unsatisfactory image of the haggard, dishevelled exile. He worked repeatedly on this throughout the Autumn of 1883⁴¹ but both he, Stasov and Tretyakov, who later

bought the work reluctantly after much cajoling by Stasov,⁴² were still debating its merits after the opening of the Peredvizhniki exhibition, when Repin began the first bout of re-painting.

Recalling his first sight of the canvas, in Autumn 1883, Stasov had been unimpressed with all but a few minor details: "the rest was of no interest," he told Tretyakov. As for Repin:

"He said that he himself was very dissatisfied with the principal figure, and that he had worn himself out over it! He had changed and repainted it several times and was totally disheartened. 'I want to drop it completely', he told me."⁴³

Repin had been confiding to Tretyakov, up to and beyond the Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1884, his dissatisfaction with the painting.⁴⁴ In early 1885, in response to Repin's suggestion, and only one week after purchasing the painting, Tretyakov agreed that the revolutionary's face should be repainted, suggesting something younger, more likeable, possibly to be modelled on Garshin.⁴⁵ There is no evidence that Garshin subsequently sat, though Tretyakov later referred to the "second, Garshin version" as the one which satisfied him.⁴⁶ Both this and the original version are now lost, due to Repin's repainting, though fortuitously a photograph was made of the original version in October 1884.⁴⁷

Despite the air of increasing despondency which the exile's countenance assumed, the rest of the painting retained its bright, airy atmosphere. The number of participants was increased from four to seven and the room became more homely. But the reactions of the characters had become decidedly more ambiguous, suggesting not just that the revolutionary's arrival was unexpected, but that possibly it was also unwelcome. The young girl clearly does not recognise him (a suggestion that his sentence was a long one) and stares suspiciously. The maid, who ushers the hesitant figure into the room, is impassive and seemingly indifferent. Only the young boy is delighted to see him. The central, older female figure, is startled to her feet, though we do not see whether in joy or out of shock. A younger woman, sitting at the piano, has only just realised who the intruder is, and as yet registers only surprise.⁴⁸ The whole scene, charged with psychological tautness, is on the point of erupting into convivial domestic

rapture or bitter emotional recriminations. The mood of the painting has become insular, centring on the family crisis rather than the revolutionary cause.

Repin, alas, was still not happy with this work and two years later, in Autumn 1887, events took a quite farcical turn. Taking advantage of Tretyakov's absence, Repin descended on his gallery, brushes and paints in hand, ostensibly to re-touch some displeasing aspects of *Ivan the Terrible*, but took the additional liberty of working on *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, and worse, to completely repaint the face of the exile.⁴⁹ He wrote to Tretyakov: "...I have corrected at last the face of the figure entering in *They Did Not Expect Him* (it now seems right to me)..."⁵⁰

Quite what the painting now looked like we do not know. Grabar, Repin's biographer, having taken a poll of those who had seen it, speaks of a wide-eyed, confused expression.⁵¹ Two sketches for the returning exile, held by the Ateneum, fit this description and might suggest how the alterations appeared.⁵² Tretyakov was extremely displeased, considering that an air of spiritual suffering which he so admired had been lost.⁵³ Despite attempts to recapture this quality Repin finally admitted defeat after repainting in 1888 what amounts to a fourth and final version, that which now hangs in the Tretyakov Gallery.

The expression on the exile's face now suggests a range of emotional possibilities, none of them positive: guilt, suffering, confusion, despondency, shame, timidity - all or any could fit. The important, major change, resides in comparing this version with the first, positive sketches, from which it is plain that the painting's entire ethos had been transformed between 1883-1888, from a confident to a diffident portrayal of the revolutionary. Though Repin recorded his distress at the bloody aftermath of Alexander II's assassination it seems glib to suggest that there is a direct, conscious correlation, between the consecutively less positive re-paintings of the exile in *They Did Not Expect Him*, and the estrangement from society of the revolutionary, as violence and extremism replaced naivety and idealism. Though the work remained, undoubtedly, a statement of personal suffering, suggesting the human price that both exile and

family have paid for political ideals, it is abundantly clear from correspondence of the time that Repin was driven chiefly by artistic concerns, chiefly his inability to combine in the exile's expression the contemporary political and personal tragedy. Whilst Tretyakov was pleased with the Garshin version, and Repin with his re-painting in 1887, eventually neither had their way. In 1889 Repin considered a fifth re-painting, but was strongly dissuaded by Stasov.⁵⁴

Repin did not plan to make his statement on individual sacrifice to political ideals work through the central figure alone, though this was clearly a paramount concern, and the subsidiary parts of the canvas have a detailed iconography which attests the scope of his undertaking.⁵⁵ The decorous furnishings suggest general respectability but of particular interest are the prints and pictures hanging on the wall. These include portraits of Nikolai Nekrasov, a colleague of Chernyshevsky's and perhaps the most eminent of populist poets, and of Taras Shevchenko, a self-taught peasant artist and political activist. Both suggest the exile's allegiance to the failing liberal cause, whilst a large print of Schteiben's *Golgotha* introduces the theme of Christ's sacrifice.⁵⁶ Further religious emphasis has been suggested by the cross-like space in which the exile is stranded,⁵⁷ and by the intersecting light sources which converge at the revolutionary's feet, though both are conjecture.⁵⁸ The sense of martyrdom which permeates many of Repin's images of revolutionaries is nevertheless to the fore.

A small but interesting detail, on the right-hand wall, is a photograph of the assassinated Alexander II lying in state, positioned, appropriately enough, away from the other images and next to a large map of the Russian empire. Possibly this was done to placate the censor, though the critic Suvorin pointed to an irony in that the exile, detained at His Majesty's pleasure, would have been amongst those released as part of an amnesty to mark Alexander III's coronation, and that his family, respectable people, possibly do not share his convictions, still revering the "Tsar Liberator."⁵⁹

What these details seem to confirm is the artist's continuing involvement with the protagonists of liberal, reformist ideals, embodied in the writers of the 1860s, which, as a result of the Tsar's

murder, had been usurped by more desperate remedies. The exile's sacrifice might have been negated by the more extreme trend of political activity, but though he is himself not a positive image, the artist appears to be mourning and reasserting the validity of the values rejected in favour of violence. In one of his most quoted passages, made at the time he was working on *They Did Not Expect Him*, Repin showed that he was not blind to the changes going on about him, but that he was faithful to certain artistic ideals and social ethics:

"Beauty is a matter of taste; for me it is to be found in truth...The old masters always aspired to truth...in a word they progressed...I would despise myself if I started to paint carpets which please the eye, to weave lace, to busy oneself with fashion, in short, in various ways to mix God's gifts with scrambled eggs, to adapt oneself to the new spirit of the times...No! I am a man of the sixties, I am a backward person for whom the ideals of Gogol, Belinsky, Turgenev, Tolstoy and other idealists, are not yet dead. With all my small strength I aspire to embody my ideas in truth; contemporary life affects me deeply, it does not give me peace, it begs to be represented on canvas..."⁵⁰

Despite this denial of one-sided, purely aesthetic art, in favour of the traditional, socially conscious narrative, Repin did manage to retain much of the freshness and spontaneity of the first oil sketch of 1883, *They Did Not Expect Her*. A soft, diffused sunlight permeates the cold room, highlighting surfaces and textures with pleasing tonal contrasts: the delicate lilac and yellow pattern of the wallpaper, the vibrant red splashes on the table contrasting with the silver cloth, the sun-filled exterior just glimpsed through the french windows, all show an apparently causal sureness of touch. The individual figures, which appear so incidental in reproduction, are all fine, individually observed portraits. It is a fact worth constantly repeating that the overall harmony of tones which creates the 'realistic', or photographic look to many of Repin's canvases in reproduction, is powerfully contradicted by the works themselves. The window and exterior on the far left of *They Did Not Expect Him* are painted in a most impressionistic manner (as is much else), and whole areas of the canvas, particularly within the wallpaper patterning, are left purposely untouched by paint, yet contribute to the colour harmonies. The canvas abounds with light, hurried, brushwork dabbed on in pure

colours with a coherency which only becomes apparent when standing away from the picture.

Though one would be hard pressed to point to a specific influence it seems inescapable to conclude that Repin's European tour of 1883 had given him a fresh, painterly impetus.⁶¹ Benois, who approached the 1884 Peredvizhnik exhibition with preconceptions of another social lecture, admitted:

"I left the show quite overcome by the impression made on me by Repin's picture *The Unexpected Guest*. The freedom of the style and the freshness of the painting surprised me. I found it daringly simple and genuine, although utterly unlike everything that had hitherto been considered worthy of attention at home."⁶²

Benois's account leaves little doubt that the exhibition, and Repin's painting in particular, were a great talking point, and Stasov, writing to the sculptor Mark Antokolsky a few days after the exhibition opened, commented on the large public attendance.⁶³ As always with Repin's paintings, but perhaps with none more so than this politically sensitive work, the press had little time for aesthetic niceties. The ambiguous nature of the characters resulted in a few reviews which suggested a lack of tendentiousness, speculating instead on the emotional states of those portrayed,⁶⁴ but in general the abuse heaped upon the work was unprecedented.⁶⁵

"Mr Repin undoubtedly executes with genius.... A pathetic genius, swamped in artistic errors, pandering to public curiosity in the most vulgar manner [постредством рабьего языка]... If you do not feel tears coming to your eyes at the sight of such shocking family events as Mr Repin depicts, then you can be sure that the reason for this is the cold contrivance of the subject, the prevalence of immature thoughts on top of superficial feeling. The artist is not to blame if Russian political prisoners have been unable to arouse sympathy, since they are not arousing it in a single true Russian person. His mistake consists of this, that in a cold calculation to the unhealthy curiosity of the public, he created such an unsympathetic, semi-idiotic face, right at the heart of the painting."⁶⁶

A critic in the same magazine, bemoaning the lack of historical and religious canvases over the predominance of landscapes, portraits and urban genre scenes, joined the attack.

"Out of all the paintings in the Peredvizhnik exhibition none distinguishes itself for such obscurity of thought, neglect of

the elementary principles of drawing, ignorance of linear perspective and thoughtless colouration as *They Did Not Expect Him* by Mr Repin. Possibly it heralds a new, free Russian school of art, able to stress one single virtue - total liberation from academic routines, but this alone, and so centuries of artistic principles, completely necessary for art to be art, have been cast aside. Each of Mr Repin's paintings, from *Seeing Off a Recruit*, witnesses the wilful decline of his talent...even after *Religious Procession* it was hard to anticipate such a downwards gallop as *They Did Not Expect Him*.⁶⁷

Another conservative writer found the work guilty of "too much tendentiousness", the central figure "expressive" but lacking "greater decisiveness", the environment "unattractive, untidy and comfortless", the children "scrofulous and emaciated", but worst of all, the painter's intentions bogus, full of "pseudo-liberal denunciations and protests".⁶⁸ Even cruder assessments were forthcoming. V.P. Meshchersky, writing for *Grazhdanin*, rejoiced that the artist had defeated his tendentious purpose by making the exile "offensive and ugly". He continued: "...there is evil, discontent, rage and animosity in his appearance...he looks at his family with hatred."⁶⁹

Outside of Repin's circle of friends and admirers it is difficult to find a positive review for a painting which clearly hit a raw nerve in conservative circles. One critic did suggest that the exile, whilst clearly suffering a set-back, did not have the countenance of a defeated man, rather that he showed: "complete strength, restrained, but profound."⁷⁰

Suvorin described the exile's face as "exhausted, lean, sunburnt and unsightly", but at least "energetic", and the figure as a whole: "harmonious, strong, not broken by misfortune." But he suggested that his entrance was artificially conceived: "...with the desire to startle the family by his unexpected appearance, to produce an effect".⁷¹ Stasov objected particularly strongly to this, not the most reactionary of comments by far, retorting that nothing could be more ridiculous, and that the critic was a greater fool than he supposed the artist to be. He claimed that Repin's work depicted contemporaneity without falsehood and that the public loved and valued him all the more for this. For him the scene was natural and "conciliatory", and he roundly condemned "the brotherhood of

feuilletonists who have descended upon him from all sides."⁷²

As usual Stasov expended more time on castigating conservative critics than actually reviewing, but was bowled over by the painting:

"I consider this picture one of the very greatest works of the new Russian painting. The face of the central figure shows energy and a strength not broken by misfortunes. The work shows mighty intelligence, mind and thought. Repin did not rest on his laurels after *Burlaki* he advanced still further...and I think that this current painting is the greatest, most important and most perfect of his creations."⁷³

Kramskoy, usually quick to praise, was curiously silent, though he did take Suvorin to task over his review.⁷⁴ Tolstoy, by whose judgment Repin set great store, was more interested in Kramskoy's *Inconsolable Sorrow* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1884), a restrained but powerful study of a grieving young widow. An entry in his diary for 5 April, 1884, merely notes: "Went to the exhibition. Kramskoy's excellent, Repin's didn't come off."⁷⁵

They Did Not Expect Him was an ambitious, and by Repin's previous standards, complex undertaking. Many of his works, using multi-figured compositions, required great technical expertise, others, forceful presentations of powerful individuals, were executed with panache and great drama, but none attempt the controlled psychological subtlety of *They Did Not Expect Him*. The ambiguity of the painting, which allowed critics to see a condemnation of political oppression or, according to taste, a sermon on the inadvisability of political activism, appears for once to have become a positive strength, and might better be termed the painting's enigma. The overtones of religiosity that permeate both the physical details of the room and the martyred figure of the exile,⁷⁶ suggest an overriding human concern, both with the exile and his family. Whether or not they are pleased at his return, the episode is a tragic, sorry one, which might have prompted observers of both political persuasions to ask why matters had come to this lamentable pass. Above all the painting is both a moving and eloquent attempt to create a contemporary document of crumbling, thwarted ideals, combined with a universal comment on the individual cost and wider consequences of personal principles. Though both the ethical and painterly problems were not resolved to the artist's

satisfaction the bold attempt to tackle both have long made this the most highly regarded of all Repin's paintings, both in the West and the Soviet Union.⁷⁷ This alone speaks volumes for the timeless concerns that are at the heart of the work.

The fatalistic air of *They Did Not Expect Him* and *Arrest of a Propagandist* was no artistic aberration. Throughout the period encompassing both works, and many in other genres, Repin continued to work on another addition to what Soviet historians have dubbed his 'revolutionary cycle'.

Spurning Confession (1879-1885)⁷⁸

Though not strictly a piece of illustration, *Spurning Confession* (Ill. 60) was prompted by Nikolai Minsky's poem *The Last Confession*, which appeared in *Narodnaya Volya*, the illegal newspaper published by the organisation of that name.⁷⁹ Both Stasov and his lawyer brother Dmitry kept copies of illegal journals and it was through Stasov that Repin was acquainted with the poem.⁸⁰ It appears however that Repin did not show the work to Stasov whilst it was being painted. There is no mention of it in Repin's letters of the time and only much later, in 1888, did Stasov write to express his deep appreciation of the picture, and to recall how he and Repin had been moved by the poem in 1879.⁸¹

The painting is nevertheless not illustrative but purposely general and anonymous. With this simple, two-figured composition, Repin attempted to capture the spirit of Minsky's poem rather than to recreate a particular scene from it. From sketches it is clear that he worked on *Spurning Confession* during 1879-1880, at the same time he began *Arrest of a Propagandist*. The oil version illustrated here was completed in 1884 but censorship precluded its exhibition in the 12th Peredvizhnik show of that year, the same show at which *They Did Not Expect Him* appeared.⁸² In 1886, when Repin became personally acquainted with Minsky, he made a gift of the picture to the poet, enscribing the back of the canvas: "1 April 1886, to Nikolai Maximovich Vilenkin, I. Repin."⁸³ Much later Minsky left a memoir describing Repin as an artist who portrayed the late populist period of struggle with great accuracy, noting, quite rightly, that Repin eschewed depictions of

heroic, legendary feats: "The hero, depicted by Repin, lives in the world of liberatory ideas...these are educators and transformers...fighters."²⁴

Minsky's article suggests that Repin had some insight into the workings of the populist movement during the late 1870s-early 1880s, though the impetus for this picture appears to have come directly from the poem and not, so far as is known, from close contact with revolutionary figures. In the poem Minsky stresses above all the altruistic, sacrificial role of the condemned revolutionary, and it is this aspect which Repin centred upon, the sketches of 1879-1880 becoming consistently more concise, moving always closer to emphasising the gulf of misunderstanding between the priest, symbol of the State, and the condemned populist.

A sketch of 1879 (Russian Museum) shows the priest and the executioner entering the cell. Minsky's poem describes a priest entering carrying a crucifix, followed by the executioner and soldiers.²⁵ Repin, however, soon dropped this in favour of a confrontation between just the priest and the prisoner. Two drawings of the same year (National Gallery, Prague, 1879) show variations on this composition, the space between the priest and the narodnik gradually opening out.²⁶ Three more sketches of 1880 (Tretyakov Gallery) are on the same lines: the priest inviting repentance and the populist refusing. All show a marked degree of resolution on the face of the revolutionary, and in one he is seen with his hand raised, vigorously berating the cleric.²⁷

The style of the painting, dark, painted with rough, hurried brushwork in muted tones, with just a few important features picked out in highlight, the paint impasted, is reminiscent of old master works, particularly Rembrandt.²⁸ The use of a style more readily associated with religious themes is particularly apt to convey the spiritual, sacrificial dimension of the work. The light, falling from an unseen source at the top left-hand corner of the canvas, is used to illuminate the bare, essential details of the work: the priest's profile, the face of the revolutionary and, most importantly, the crucifix, which shines brightly at the centre of the canvas. The defiance of the prisoner, as well as his isolation at this, his final

hour, has often resulted in comparisons with religious iconography.⁸⁹ Even on the most superficial level there is an obvious comparison between Repin's work and Kramskoy's pensive *Christ in the Wilderness* (1872, Ill. 107). A correlation between the death of Christ and the revolutionary's political sacrifice is apparent from Minsky's poem:

"Forgive me Lord, that the poor and the hungry
I loved, warmly, like brothers...
Forgive me Lord, that the eternal good
I did not consider a fairy-tale."⁹⁰

The subject and sentiment of Repin's painting is very close to V. Makovsky's small canvas *Prisoner* (Kharkov State Museum of Fine Art, 1882), depicting a populist alone in his cell. It too is intimate and makes use of virtually no other details than the prisoner himself. It is executed in brown and grey tones, the face lit from a light-source from above, to the right of the figure, and the similarity between it and Kramskoy's *Christ in the Wilderness*, is even more marked, the pose, with hands clasped on his lap, being repeated identically.⁹¹

Even without Repin's written corroboration there seems little risk of error in asserting that the theme of altruistic self-sacrifice to an ideal was his primary concern. Debate has nevertheless centred around the image of the revolutionary and, as with *They Did Not Expect Him*, whether Repin has depicted a spent or an unbowed force. The revolutionary socialist Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich (1873-1955), suggested that the youth of the day drew great strength from such paintings and that they swore oaths in front of many at the Tretyakov, including: "...the painting in which the proud revolutionary, firm in his conviction, refuses the priest's blessing before execution."⁹² This is naturally a view shared by most Soviet commentators, though a dissenting voice is occasionally heard to point out that the image of the revolutionary is far from heroic, and that whilst the populist movement was an idealistic struggle, carried out by sincere and strong-willed adherents, it was eventually "consecrated by defeat."⁹³ A more usual reading, however, gives a glowing account, in joyous prose, of the revolutionary's victory in death over the forces of autocracy: "He is consecrated by death, but by no means defeated."⁹⁴

The figure of the priest has also, naturally, been most often

interpreted as a condemnation of the Orthodox Church and the role it played in upholding the autocratic regime. It seems from the initial sketch, the one including the executioner, that Repin first considered using a corpulent model for the priest, one which would compare unfavourably with the cold, ascetic revolutionary. However, in the final version the priest is represented only by a hint of profile and it is his office, represented by the crucifix, which is prevalent, not his person. In previous canvases, most notably *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, the artist had shown a lack of subtlety in denigrating the representatives of the *status quo*, and it appears from the restrained nature of *Spurning Confession* that, whilst not wishing to exonerate the part played by the clergy on these occasions, Repin did not wish to detract too strongly from the revolutionary himself. It is no accident that his face alone is seen fully.

The private nature of this painting, the fact that Repin did not show it to Stasov until long after it was finished, as well as the refusal of the authorities to allow its public exhibition, show that the theme was one to which Repin felt personally bound, and to which the authorities felt hostile. But though the importance and courage of artists working on political themes should not be underestimated, it seems equally apparent that, as with *Arrest of a Propagandist* and *They Did Not Expect Him*, *Spurning Confession* makes the focus of its attention a tragic one. This does not necessarily imply a reduction of the revolutionary's commitment or heroism though, like the religious iconography after which the work is patterned, it does suggest that it is not a blindly one-sided canvas, and that the artist was only too conversant with the irreconcilable, fundamental gulf of incomprehensibility that divided his two protagonists.

In 1913 Repin executed a new drawing on the same theme endorsed with an incorrect quotation from Minsky's poem: "My sin! That I loved the poor and the hungry as brothers."²⁵ This seems closer in spirit to what Repin hoped to convey in *Spurning Confession*, than does a tract on the evils of autocracy, though the latter is, undeniably, implicit.

A further work of this period, without doubt connected with *Spurning Confession*, is the dramatically titled *Revolutionary Woman Awaiting Execution* (1884, Ill. 61). Previously unknown, even amongst Soviet experts, the painting was not properly considered until 1948, at which time it was thought lost.⁹⁶ The depiction of a woman revolutionary was not only historically accurate but potentially explosive, and certainly highly emotive. The use of a single figure enfolded by darkness, very much like Makovsky's *Prisoner*, further increases the sense of isolation felt in *Spurning Confession*.

According to popular tradition Repin painted the work in connection with information issuing from the 'Trial of the 13', and that amongst the youth of the 1890s the painting was known as *Vera Figner in Prison*.⁹⁷ Vera Figner (1842-1952), a terrorist leader who was arrested in 1883, some time after the execution of the regicides, was sentenced to hang in September of 1884, though this was later commuted to life imprisonment, spent in solitary confinement. The date of the trial and of the painting tie up, but it is by no means sure that Repin used Vera Figner as his model, and certainly not possible that he could have painted her from life, though Figner was certainly acquainted with the visual arts. She is reputed to have known Yaroshenko personally, taking solace from his painting *Life is Everywhere* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1888), as well as Surikov's *The Boyarynya Morozova* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1887). The first, depicting the transportation of prisoners who from their barred carriage watch some birds feeding, she regarded as an affirmation that incarceration could not suppress the love of life,⁹⁸ whilst Surikov's work was viewed as an image of suffering for one's ideals.⁹⁹ There is no mention in her memoirs of Repin, which one would expect to find if she had been the model for his painting, or even if, mistakenly, those about her later imputed her likeness to it.

Revolutionary Woman Awaiting Execution is nevertheless in the same mould as *Spurning Confession* as a secular icon on revolutionary suffering, but its power, and Repin's political intentions, have to be judged in the light of its history. It was first exhibited in 1896 under the innocuous heading *Anguish*, a title retained in the 26th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1898, where it was sold for the benefit of

the Women's Medical Institute.¹⁰⁰ Whether Repin fought shy of exhibiting the painting under its proper title, or whether experience had taught him that it would simply not get past the censor, we do not know. Nevertheless, he showed awareness of current political events and, even if privately, a need to comment on them. As he told Murashko in connection with *They Did Not Expect Him* "contemporary life affects me deeply, it does not give me peace, it begs to be represented on canvas..."¹⁰¹ It seems clear from Repin's artistic output that this statement was not merely to be understood on a public level, but encompassed the need, often privately, to work through themes and ideas that presented themselves, to test their validity and suitability.

A point in case is the so-called 'Women's Question', the debate over women's rights and their role in society. It would be fair to say that by and large artists concerned themselves very little with this issue and that Yaroshenko's depictions of progressive female students are remembered precisely for being exceptional. Repin, unlike many of his contemporaries, showed some awareness of the increasing political and social involvement of women which, if not pursued with any consistency, left a sufficient legacy of works for serious consideration.¹⁰² *Revolutionary Woman Awaiting Execution* and *They Did Not Expect Her* are the most notable examples, whilst in connection with his charitable involvement with female medical students, Repin also painted a little known canvas *Woman Student at an Anatomy Lesson*,¹⁰³ which shows as resolute, as serious-minded an image of Russian women as any presented by Yaroshenko.

Repin and the Revolutionary Theme

The theme of the revolutionary, despite its prominence in Soviet literature, was not a particularly recurrent one. A quick glance through the annual Peredvizhnik exhibition catalogues will show that these were not only in a minority, but were the province of a small band of artists. Alongside Repin, Yaroshenko and Vladimir Makovsky were the chief exponents of penal and revolutionary scenes. In addition to those works by Yaroshenko already mentioned, *The Convict* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1878), showing a solitary figure in a spartan cell, standing on a table to catch a glimpse of the sun's rays at his

high window, is yet another image of isolation and personal reflection, rather than of social interaction.

Makovsky began revolutionary themes during the populist era, his most notable work being *Vecherinka* (Tretyakov Gallery 1875-1897), depicting a meeting of populists who, realistically, would have all been much younger than those portrayed. Like Repin, Makovsky worked on this canvas over many years, eventually including a central female student figure.

At the end of the 1870s, when the populists were at their height of activity, Makovsky completed *Sentenced* (1879, Ill.62), a work reminiscent of *They Did Not Expect Him*. It shows the convict, a young man, being marched off to prison between a number of threatening police officials with drawn swords. Like Repin's picture the drama centres around the reactions of the man's family, though in this case the convict's shame is quite apparent and his family's grief unrestrained. Unlike Repin's work the characters are of peasant stock, which might suggest that the offence is not a political one. The painting was much appreciated by Stasov, who praised its accurate and tragic depiction of contemporary life.¹⁰⁴

Makovsky returned to the picture in 1879-90 with a variant including a sympathetic pair of male and female students, connecting the hero with the intelligentsia and the activist youth of the day. The pallid, nervous convict is, however, an unconvincing image of the populist heroism, lacking even the tragic integrity of Repin's revolutionaries.¹⁰⁵

On the theme of women revolutionaries Makovsky painted *The Acquitted Woman* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1882), the same year he completed work on *The Prisoner*. The woman in question is clearly not a dangerous terrorist and she is seen reuniting with her family in a warm, domestic scene. The work does however prompt the question as to what her purported crime was, what drove such a respectable young woman to it, in which respect it is an accurate reflection of a current social trend.¹⁰⁶

Two years later, in 1884, Makovsky painted an interesting work, related to Yakobi's *Prisoner's Halt* (Ill.2), *At the Etape* (Kiev State Museum of Russian Art). The etape, a local halting-place for groups of

deported convicts in transit, enjoyed a fearsome reputation and attracted the attention of a number of artists.¹⁰⁷

Makovsky's painting, executed during the years of political reaction following the death of Alexander II, depicts an arrested peasant, part of a convoy, appearing in the dusty distance, the accent of injustice and oppression somewhat diluted by the masterly landscape. A. Arkhipov's painting of the same title, exhibited at the 21st Peredvizhniki in 1893, shows the train of ragged convicts in greater detail, set against a parched, sun-filled landscape. The suffering of the forced march and the wretched condition of the convicts is well evoked.¹⁰⁸ The Polish artist Ya. Malchevsky painted more grimly on the same theme, *Death at the Etape*, a scene of uncompromising squalor and human misery.¹⁰⁹ An equally bold denunciation of the institution came from Sergei Ivanov in *Etape. One Did Not Survive* (1892, Ill. 63). This strange picture, with its diagonal composition, cropped at the edges like a piece of photo journalism, depicts a group of exhausted convicts grabbing some rare sleep, stretched out on bare boards. The prominent inclusion of a pair of iron foot-shackles and the lacerated, cloth-bound feet of the central prisoner, combine with the title to suggest a miserable, inglorious death amongst inhuman conditions.

Despite these notable examples the use of political symbols, notably of convicts or revolutionaries, remained an occupation for the few. Beyond the possibility that artists were, as a breed, apolitical or conservative by nature, a personal commitment must have been a prerequisite for addressing these themes. As one writer has pointed out: "To paint a political subject was in itself a moral decision."¹¹⁰ This does not, however, imply uncritical devotion towards revolutionary activity, as Soviet commentators aver, merely a willingness to tackle difficult and sensitive contemporary issues.

The difficulty in assessing Repin's attitude towards the political upheavals of the late 1870s-early 1880s, resides not only in the artist's scant, often non-existent references to specific canvases, but to his pattern of working which, if it appears erratic, was done with purpose. Repin was possessed of a broad and versatile talent, temperamentally incapable of tying himself too strongly to one genre

or one viewpoint. Though his revolutionary cycle has rightly been considered an important part of his output, his practise was to explore those facets of life which most interested him at any one given time, which usually were many. As one visitor to the artist's studio commented:

"It is necessary, in his words, to paint a picture in the way you rewrite a poem, so that work on a painting can stretch over several years to be eventually abandoned, if the idea that inspired it changes or pales beneath the influx of fresher impressions."¹¹¹

The fact that Repin knew, or rather met, many members of a revolutionary political persuasion is interesting, but proves no more than the fact that he also met and painted members of the Imperial family and its official representatives. Few Soviet accounts will point out that Repin's personal contacts with revolutionaries were most often limited to émigré figures.¹¹² Lavrov, for instance, spent no more than a few months inside Russia after 1870, and his influence was at best peripheral.¹¹³ Nevertheless, Repin did show an abiding commitment to, and fascination with, the image of the revolutionary.

In 1881, when an European campaign headed by Victor Hugo was launched to spare the life of G.M. Gelfman, one of the murderers of Alexander II, Repin painted a sympathetic and compassionate portrait of the condemned man, though, as with the connection between Vera Figner and *Revolutionary Woman Awaiting Execution*, it is inconceivable that he ever saw Gelfman. Again, regrettably, there is not a single word about the picture amongst Repin's large body of writings.¹¹⁴

But since Repin was an artist his allegiances must best be sought in his works, and here there is an undoubted consistency. In the same manner that an humanitarian streak runs through his depictions of the Russian peasantry, in his revolutionary cycle the tone is sympathetic, and even if he was not close to many of the political protagonists of the time, he followed their trials and subsequent sentencing closely.¹¹⁵ Even the most hard-bitten of Soviet commentators will admit that Repin was not a revolution by nature, merely a sympathiser, and furthermore a sympathiser who had no time for terrorism.¹¹⁶ It seems no coincidence that Repin's major works in this

genre are confined to the years of greatest populist activity and that, after the collapse of the movement under the repressive measures instigated by Alexander III, following the assassination of his father, the artist appears to have lost his appetite for this subject matter. A sense of disillusionment, rather than defeatism, seems to permeate the final version of *They Did Not Expect Him*.

The evidence of Repin's paintings reveal a consistent concern with the revolutionary as a social victim, pariah or martyr, never as a positive hero, nor as a bomb-wielding anarchist. In part this is due to the period of his greatest activity, which coincided with the first phase of populist activity rather than later, more extremist manifestations of political coercion. The spirit of his works, especially *Spurning Confession* and *They Did Not Expect Him*, does suggest though that Repin was politically astute enough to see the increasingly tragic writing on the wall.

Official Paintings. Repin and the Monarchy

During the 1880s, when Repin was painting his most celebrated revolutionary canvases, the decade which also saw his most serious clash with authority over *Ivan the Terrible*, Alexander III made a concerted attempt to bring the Peredvizhniki under the Imperial wing as a National School. Funding for state purchases was greatly increased, plans were drawn up to reform the Academy, long shelved plans for provincial art schools and museums were revived, and the Court became properly russified, dropping both the French and German languages along with the long standing use of foreign styles in Court decoration and architecture. Public commissions, churches, railway stations, civic buildings, were contracted to Neo-Slavic designs, modelled on re-workings and re-adoptions of Muscovite styles, of which Tretyakov's gallery is possibly the best known today.

In general Alexander promoted both nationalist and religious art, and if the two could be combined, so much the better. The decision to create a new museum, exclusively for Russian art, was greeted with much approval. This included Stasov, who wrongly divined that the Peredvizhniki were about to be recognised as the true artistic

representatives of Russian art, not that the Tsar wished to use the realist, native style to his own ends, by luring the best exponents of the school back to the Academy.¹¹⁷ Press attacks on the realists gradually abated and attempts to find common cause in nationalist subject matter prepared the ground for a reconciliation; on Alexander's terms. It was not long before Imperial purchases at Peredvizhnik exhibitions, hitherto extremely sparse, outstripped all others. The decline of the Peredvizhnik ethos of social commitment might rightly be marked down to the end of this decade, as artists, previously on the outside, found themselves embraced by the largest and wealthiest source of patronage in Russia and the temptation, as it had existed in the Academy, to produce unadventurous, eye-soothing or sentimental native scenes, or rousing celebrations of national superiority, produced a depreciation of quality roughly from the 1890s onwards.¹¹⁸

One aspect of the change of attitude amongst artists was a reluctance to refuse official commissions, though this could be a delicate matter at the best of times. Kramskoy, in 1883, painted Alexander's coronation, and the following year Repin was drawn reluctantly into the sphere of official painting.

Alexander III Receives the District Headmen in the Courtyard of the Petrovsky Palace in Moscow (1886)

The commission to paint this large, patriotic work (Ill. 64), extolling the virtues of the new Tsar, was put Repin's way by the artist Bogolyubov, a former drawing tutor to the young Alexander, with whom Repin had been close in Paris. Bogolyubov doubtless thought he was conferring favour on a friend, but Repin felt otherwise.

Ironically the commission came to Repin at the same time he was working on *Ivan the Terrible*, the canvas with which he was exorcising the horrors of contemporary life, most of which were being wrought in Alexander's name. It seems incongruous that Alexander should seek the services of such a radical artistic dissenter, and this in itself suggests an anomaly in official versions of the artist's career. Whilst it is fair to assume that the Tsar was about a process of enticing artists back to the state-run fold, and that Repin's scalp would be a prized possession, he clearly saw no contradiction in

approaching the painter of revolutionary themes to execute a major, patriotic canvas extolling his own autocratic virtues.

Following the assassination of his father in 1881 Alexander had re-proclaimed the unchallengeable nature of autocracy, thus destroying populist dreams of greater reform. The speech, which Repin considered to be reactionary, called for peasant participation in local government, already small, to be abolished, the Tsar exhorting the district headmen instead to follow the leadership of the aristocracy.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, he pursued work on the project through various compositions and studies between late April 1884 and June 1886, when he wrote to Stasov that work would be finished within a week, clearly glad to see the last of it.¹²⁰

Repin's initial, perhaps naive idea, had been to contrast the participants, as he had done with *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, and at first, though he was inhibited by having to work at the Palace, the project seems to have filled him with enthusiasm. But he was conscious of official reservations. He told Tretyakov:

"This new theme is quite rich, and I like it, especially from the technical side. *The Tsar and the People in the Courtyard of the Nobility*. What a variety of types, expressions, faces, contrasts - of the most unexpected and artistic kind! Only yesterday however, a gentleman acquainted with the requirements of the court, seeing my study, said that it would undoubtedly be rejected.

What a pity to have wasted the time! And especially now, but I admit I shall not be at all sad if this commission is not fulfilled."¹²¹

Repin's fears were well founded. It appears that the Tsar had in mind something reminiscent of Christ preaching to the faithful, and despite the artist's haggling he was compelled to paint the Tsar full-face and the populace from the rear.¹²² When finally exhibited in 1886, following three successive years of controversy,¹²³ the conservative press were not slow to point out Repin's lapse from radicalism.¹²⁴

The painting was quickly esconced in the Tsar's Moscow Palace, where it remained until 1959, before being transferred to the Tretyakov Gallery. That the subject matter has rendered the painting something

of a taboo in Soviet literature is a pity, since by the evidence of the sketches, and of this rare black and white reproduction, it is, as Repin predicted, most pleasing from an aesthetical point of view.¹²⁵

Repin's biographer, Grabar, describes the colourful elders, dressed in various styles of kaftans and national dress, considering it one of Repin's finest technical accomplishments, praising the group around the Tsaritsa, who stands with her children, and especially the Tsaritsa herself, under a pink parasol, with her daughter standing in front in a white dress, their warm faces flooded with sunlight.¹²⁶ Though Repin makes no reference to the artist, this group of figures is particularly close in spirit and style to many of Renoir's works, particularly the little girl, posing gauchely in her pretty dress. The plain air atmosphere of the painting which, even in black and white, comes across as fresh and airy, can be seen in colour reproductions of two studies. A full-length portrait of the artist's daughter Vera, used as a model for the Tsar's young daughter, dressed all in white, the subtle pink of the courtyard gravel reflecting on her luminous dress,¹²⁷ and in a study for the headman in front and to the left of the Tsar in the finished work. This figure, painted again in bright sunlight, with lilac and soft peach colours on his clothing reflected from the ground, is a salient lesson in the integral aestheticism of many of Repin's works, too easily overshadowed by the dramatic narrative, or in this instance, the imposing subject matter.¹²⁸

The composition, as described by many writers, many of whom have probably not seen the work, does indeed make the Tsar, the embodiment of imperial magnificence, the focus of all concerned. It is misleading however to suggest that Repin was forced to paint only the backs of heads to represent the people. An assembly of figures to the left are painted in profile and the artist did allow himself the luxury of having at least one headman, on the right-hand side of the canvas, turn defiantly to gaze directly at the viewer.

As a technical accomplishment the work is of the highest order, but the subject carries a miasma to which Soviet art historians have been consistently unwilling to expose themselves, and it is not satisfactory here to judge the work on the basis of reproductions. However, even allowing for problems of etiquette that might have

disinclined Repin to accept the commission, and acknowledging that the project eventually became an onerous one for him, one must consider that much of his dissatisfaction was with the hindrances to his artistic freedom.¹²⁹ The Court meddled with his judgment in much the same way as the hotel owner Porokhovshchikov had meddled with the constitution of *The Slavonic Composers*, but with the difference that Repin was now an artist of the very highest standing. To a meticulous worker interference of this kind must have been far more irksome and more resented than the predictable conservative attacks on his political mores. Certainly at the outset, when the painting presented possibilities of individual interpretation, challenges of aesthetic and compositional problems, and the expressive juxtapositioning of various 'types', the subject matter itself was not sufficient to warrant either an outright rejection of the commission or a circumspect withdrawal.

Formal Session of the State Council in Honour of Its Centenary on May 7, 1901. (1903)

A consideration of Repin's major official commission, the *State Council* (Ill. 66), is technically outside the scope of this chapter, since it post-dates the 1890s, a decade of profound changes in Repin's artistic life, when he broke with Stasov, combined briefly with Diaghilev's *World of Art* stable, left the *Peredvizhniki* to join the reformed Academy and vociferously espoused formal and aesthetic concerns as the true aims of painting. Though all of these are considered in Chapter 7, *State Council* is a significant and uncharacteristic work which fits easily into no other category than that of official painting. In addition, when the commission was proffered in 1901, Repin had made his peace with Stasov, reaffirmed his commitment to the traditions of the 1860s, and broken with the *World of Art* following its crude attacks on realist artists with whom he was close.

He had not, however, left the Academy at this time, and the decision to place the commission in his hands would not have come as a surprise. Nor was this the first occasion on which Repin had painted Nicholas II. Twice, in 1895 and 1896, he had portrait sittings with

the Tsar.¹³⁰ Previously, in 1894, when Nicholas acceded to the throne, Repin painted a substantial canvas depicting his wedding, a hurried occasion due to Alexander's untimely death (Ill. 65). Both in Repin's own letters, and in the many writings about the artist, there is no mention of this work which, seemingly, must have occasioned much time and effort. For some unknown reason it 'escaped' recently to be exhibited in Finland. The catalogue of that exhibition, written by the head of the department at the Russian Museum dealing in the second half of the 19th century, again makes no reference to it, not even briefly.¹³¹

The work, though large, has all the qualities of a sketch, and, in the absence of further information, one must presume it remained an unfulfilled commission. It seems doubtful that the wooden portraits of the Tsar and his bride were done from life, but the treatment of this canvas does have specific similarities with the *State Council*. The heavy decorative accent on clothing and furniture, the use of imperious architecture which overshadows the puny participants, and in particular the diminutive treatment of the Tsar himself, who, both in this sketch for his wedding, and in the *State Council*, is represented on a scale which Alexander III clearly would not have tolerated.

The *State Council* was commissioned in April 1901 to mark the centenary of its establishment by Alexander I. The first three months were spent studying the council meetings, for which Repin was given extraordinary permission, having insisted that everything was to be done from life. In all he worked on the enormous canvas between April 1901 and December 1903, with the assistance of two of his pupils, B. M. Kustodiev and I. S. Kulikov.

A work on this scale presented formidable technical problems. The circular chamber posed a variety of difficulties, not least of which was the perspective. An additional consideration was the sensitive problem of who was to be painted large, in the foreground, and who, due to the dictates of the circular chamber, would be presented as small, indistinct, high up to the rear of the canvas. In the event the Tsar himself was pushed to the background, though he was not the only casualty as Repin was forced to reduce the number of members who usually sat, to a more manageable figure.¹³² Another major factor for

consideration was how to satisfactorily arrange over seventy figures, ranging between half-length to full-length portraits, some life size, others smaller or larger, and to further retain an harmonious colour scheme amongst the riot of decorated chests, official uniforms and sumptuous furnishings of the chamber.

A number of artistic devices were employed to solve these difficulties. The fore-figures are painted much larger than life to forestall the portraits in the background dwindling to minuscule proportions. To solve the difficulties of perspective Repin adopted a system whereby the chamber is viewed from a number of converging viewpoints, rather than any single one. Additionally all lines in the picture bend rather than travel straight, since a true rendition would create the illusion of concavity and imminent collapse. This was common practice in classical architecture, the Parthenon in Athens being a prime example, and for Repin and his pupils this required very careful pre-planning.

To harmonise the colour scheme complementary tones were highlighted; black, red and yellow, punctuated with the sky-blue of members' sashes. There is some doubt as to how much of the finished work is specifically by Repin's hand. One commentator has suggested that he painted only the central part of the canvas,¹³³ though in a circular composition that radiates outwards it is difficult to know what precisely this covers. There is certainly a discrepancy in quality between the figures on the far left of the canvas, at the rear of the chamber, but otherwise the work seems harmonious in colour and artistic ability. Whatever the reality, the overall scheme of things was under Repin's direction.

It is likely that Repin would have had to rely heavily on his two assistants since from the late 1890s onwards he began to suffer increasing pains in his right hand, which had begun to atrophy. It seems that this was brought on by a lifetime's habit of drawing, which he followed as most people draw breath – continually. Doctors had advised him to give up drawing, except perhaps on Sundays. This he regarded as a death sentence and attempts to deprive him of the means to draw were thwarted by sketching with cigarette ends dipped in ink.¹³⁴ According to Repin he painted the entire *State Council* with

only the use of his left hand, though he was still stubbornly trying to use his natural hand as late as 1917.¹³⁵ Despite schooling himself to work left handed Repin found he could not hold his palette with the enervated hand, and about this time he invented a special palette, which he wore strapped to his waist, secured by a harness slung over his shoulder, enabling him to paint for long periods.¹³⁶

Despite massive technical problems Repin declined the use of photography as an aid, both for himself and for the Council members, many of whom could ill be spared for personal sittings. The artist nevertheless insisted, as usual, on individual sittings, which he completed swiftly, sketchily, in just a few sessions.¹³⁷ The picture was built up from preliminary sketches made on the day, and later each person sat in their appointed places for the oil portraits which were incorporated into the finished canvas.¹³⁸

"I am still in a terrible fuss...constantly doing studies from life; together they represent our most important officials. I am thankful, that on this occasion many of them are very obliging and come willingly, in ceremonial dress, to pose in the State Council chamber."¹³⁹

The Repin House Museum, *Penaty*, has a number of very good oil sketches of this kind, as well as a small but highly finished oil study of the chamber, including many figures. A fine drawing, in pen and pencil, with added white, shows a basic plan for the architectural layout of the room and the disposition of the furniture. Yet despite the rigorous and meticulous planning, with the assistance of Kustodiev and Kulikov, who concentrated their efforts on the accessories in the chamber, the work was finished in a surprisingly short time, less than three years.

Stylistically the *State Council* offers few surprises. It is a competent, realistic depiction of a specific event, executed with great skill, though lacking the spontaneity of the sketched portraits, some of which are now considered more important than the finished canvas and hang in the Russian Museum as independent works of art.¹⁴⁰

Despite having to paint left handed the portrait sketches show the speed and ferocity with which Repin worked. The paint on many is apparently slapped about the canvas without coherence, but on standing

back just a little the various details, epaulettes, ink wells, gold and silver embroideries, blue and red sashes, emerge from an apparent sea of painterly turmoil, suggesting great enthusiasm for the work and a perfect understanding of the medium.¹⁴¹ Many of the sitters are caught in natural, unaffected poses, writing, conferring, looking attentive or distracted. A study of the Finance Minister, S. Y. Witte, sketched informally in a white summer jacket, is a particularly relaxed and expressively free piece of painting, though, naturally, in the *State Council* he appears in full ceremonial uniform, looking rather more starched.¹⁴²

Particular attention in Soviet literature has focused on the supposedly critical nature of the portraits, which make the sitters appear oppressive or intellectually dull. As the latest work on Repin comments: "...instead of people and characters with life, he portrayed figures devoid of all real emotion and direct links with reality."¹⁴³ This school of thought, repeated as standard in Soviet monographs, has, predictably, been over-emphasised, though there is no doubting that Repin did not glorify the State's highest legislative body. The portrait of K. P. Pobedonostsev, instrumental in having *Ivan the Terrible* banned from exhibition, is a particularly unedifying image (1903, Ill. 67). Posed with a look of hypocritical meekness, his face noticeably skull-like, Repin portrays this most powerful and reactionary of advisors to the Tsar with the countenance of a sanctimonious vampire.¹⁴⁴ In his novel *Resurrection*, published in 1901, Tolstoy based the character Toporov, the cruel, narrow-minded head of the Holy Synod, on Pobedonostsev. His description of Toporov, the blue-veined hands, large skull and pursed-lipped self-esteem, could almost have been modelled on Repin's portrait. Tolstoy sums up the man's moral integrity:

"Just as it says in a certain cookery book that lobsters like being boiled alive, so he was firmly convinced - not figuratively, as in the cookery book, but literally - and was wont to declare that people liked to be kept in a state of superstition.

"His attitude towards the religion he upheld was like that of a poultry-keeper to the offal he feeds his fowls on: offal is quite disgusting but fowls like it and eat it, therefore they must be fed on offal."¹⁴⁵

The concurrence of images would suggest that, as unflattering as the portrait might appear, it has a good claim to being objective.

Critical reaction to the *State Council* was understandably good. As one astute reviewer had remarked about *Alexander III Receives the District Headmen*, this sort of subject matter tended to tie the writer's hands.¹⁴⁶ One unrestrained critic did refer to the canvas as "a Court of human animals",¹⁴⁷ but it was again the indomitable Stasov who rode full tilt at the autocratic windmill. He paid great compliment to the artistry of the work, likening it to Raphael, Rubens, Velazquez, Tintoretto and Veronese in bringing portrait subjects to life, exposing their every thought, and compared Repin with 17th century Dutch artists as one who has covered all strata of society. In his opinion it was the best work of its kind in Europe throughout the 19th century.¹⁴⁸ On the artist's ideological sentiments Stasov had no doubts, describing it gleefully as: "a collection of rascally generals, scoundrels, villains, mutilators of the country, instigators of shameless abominations and crimes, rejoicing in evil and madness."¹⁴⁹ Whether or not Repin intended quite so forceful a denunciation of the tsarist administration, he greeted Stasov's comments warmly:

"It gave me great pleasure to read your fine-sounding lines yesterday in *Novostyax* concerning my painting... It was like old times, a refreshing, playful, spring breeze fanning me; like a powerful embrace of an old friend carefully lifting me above shifting ground and shaking me to health."¹⁵⁰

Whether one accepts this critical reading depends, naturally enough, on one's outlook. To the untrained eye the *State Council* may look like a quintessential depiction of power,¹⁵¹ whilst to historically wise Soviets it is simply "a synthetic image of Russia's exalted bureaucrats."¹⁵² Ultimately people will see what they want to see, whether it be a collection of corrupt, tyrannical geriatrics, or the apotheosis of official magnificence. Artistically, however, the *State Council* stands towards the end of Repin's productive career as the antithesis of the small, inconsequential, spontaneous Parisian scenes, a triumph of technical trouble-shooting, pre-planning and sheer artistic exuberance.

Through this limited range of officially commissioned works, as well as references amongst Repin's writings, only a very general picture emerges of his outlook on autocracy, though, as will shortly be discussed, he strongly condemned the tsarist regime during the tragic events of Bloody Sunday in 1905. On the death of Alexander III he noted an air of public festivity and remarked, ruefully, that the feeble signs of mourning in St. Petersburg were as nothing compared to the send off the Polish nation gave to the artist Matejko.¹⁵³ Alexander himself, Repin described as "a complete ass by nature."¹⁵⁴

Repin's outlook was broadly democratic, and he greatly admired French republicanism,¹⁵⁵ but though he castigated official incompetence, intransigence and brutality after Bloody Sunday, he was not overtly critical of the monarchy *per se*, and his harshest comments tend to follow significant political violence. He was certainly not as ardent an anti-royalist as was Stasov who, in a comic moment from the Spanish leg of their tour of Europe in 1883, was morally outraged when the absent-minded Repin tipped his hat to the passing Royal Family.¹⁵⁶

On May 18th, 1896, during celebrations for Nicholas's coronation, a tragedy occurred at Khodynka, where 2000 people, gathered for the distribution of royal gifts, were crushed to death. Administrative incompetence saw the burden of guilt placed at the feet of the authorities. Vladimir Makovsky, who had come to the capital to contribute to the coronation album, found himself in the thick of the catastrophe. After making sketches at the cemetery to which the bodies were taken, filling two albums, he painted *At the Vagankovsky Cemetery. Burying the Victims of Khodynka* (Museum of the Revolution, Leningrad, 1896-1901). The harrowing work depicts rows of coffins and the newly dead on the cold, windy, barren field. A worker's wife sits with her three children at one coffin, above them an elderly couple are weeping. The artist highlights two figures, a man and a woman, walking towards the viewer, looking in horror at the bodies, obviously recognising somebody close to them. Makovsky recalled his motives:

"I did not exaggerate the facts and I would not have painted the picture if I had not had first hand accounts: I would have drawn for the coronation album a general crowd or individual groups of Khodynka festivities. Alas! the catastrophe deprived me of that material and plunged me into something else entirely....I could

not consider myself an artist if I did not visually embody the profoundly staggering impression made upon me."¹⁵⁷

Naturally enough Makovsky's painting was not considered fit for exhibition, but its reputation spread amongst other artists.¹⁵⁸ Repin recorded his horror at the tragedy but did not dwell on it, writing to Zhirkevich a month later:

"All the time I was in Moscow I wanted to write to you but all the frivolous festivities got in the way, and then at the end such a disaster occurred in Moscow - an historical disaster! - that I even fell sick and hastened away..."¹⁵⁹

According to Zhirkevich, who saw Repin later that month, he was still outraged that the police had tried to cover up the number of dead and had cleared the scene of the disaster before the Tsar came to inspect it. Like many he was amazed that the planned celebrations and official functions had proceeded and that Nicholas was unaware of how indecent this appeared. Repin expressed a desire to paint a work setting the gay festivities, including the Sovereign himself, against a foreground of terribly disfigured corpses of the Khodynka dead, but the project was never started.¹⁶⁰

In 1898, however, when Repin stated that there was nothing worse than painting the Tsar, he cited as reasons for this not his moral repugnance at serving autocracy, but the hindrance to his artistic freedom: sittings were strained because one could not hold conversation with the Tsar, the Court always meddled with the outcome of the painting, and, worst of all, the pay was bad!¹⁶¹

As will be discussed when dealing with Repin's portraits, the artist did have a marked dislike for reactionary conservatism, refusing to paint the publisher Katkov, and dismissing Dostoyevsky's mystical faith in Orthodoxy, but on the whole Repin's antipathy towards the monarchy was only general. He accepted its commissions, if not with alacrity, then with the minimum of public disgruntlement, but outside of major political upheavals he gave little thought to the institution. There is, for instance, only one specific reference to Nicholas II in the two volumes of his published letters, and though there are sundry comments on the ineptitude of the tsarist regime

these do not constitute a basis for establishing a life-long hatred of autocracy.¹⁶²

Repin and the Revolution of 1905

There is little doubt that Repin's political stance hardened after Bloody Sunday, 9th January 1905. Like many he was deeply shocked that a loyal and peaceful demonstration could be so brutally cut down, but his reactions to the event have been the subject of some controversy; the Soviets claim the artist as a political firebrand whilst various Western commentators denounce him as naive, or politically timid. This area of Repin's career is also outside the normal considerations of his mature period of work, but crucial to the topic in hand.

At the time of the shootings Repin was at Kuokkala on the Finnish coast. Though still employed at the Academy he spent an increasing amount of time here at his estate, *Penaty*. Despite being less than an hour's train ride from the capital he had therefore to rely on second-hand accounts of the massacre and complained a few days after the event of being in the dark: "four days without papers or news..."¹⁶³ He told Polenov that he was full of doubts and fears for the future, asked whether Gorky had been arrested, and expressed his hope that there would be reforms, but said he felt powerless to do anything.¹⁶⁴ Polenov, in tandem with Serov, felt the need for direct action and considered resigning, not just because the Academy was an Imperial institution, but because its President, Grand Duke Vladimir, was also commandant of the capital's troops. They sought to add Repin's name to the list of resignations, but Repin, who suggested that the troops were not directly under the Grand Duke's command, but that of a local official, declined to join.¹⁶⁵

Serov was the prime mover of the protest, having witnessed the killings, and according to Repin the experience wrought a terrible change in his character, as he became morose and irascible.¹⁶⁶ In mid February Serov and Polenov sent a strong protest to the Academy but no reply was forthcoming, and though Polenov later decided not to resign, Serov quit the Academy as a mark of his disgust.¹⁶⁷ Despite the fact that Peredvizhnik artists reacted conservatively to the shootings,¹⁶⁸ and that Serov's action turned out to be unique, Repin, as the

country's chief painter, with a reputation for radical, politically sensitive works, has been severely criticised for his reluctance. His excuse for refusing to censure the Academy's President has been described as "lame", whilst his stigmatisation of the courageous and principled actions of Serov and others as an "extreme political act" has been similarly condemned.¹⁶⁹ Though the first is a matter of conjecture the second is not strictly true, since Repin was speaking of Serov alone, and not his colleagues, and the charge of political extremism was made specifically by comparison with Serov's previously apolitical nature.¹⁷⁰

Serov and many other artists, some of them Repin's own pupils, put their talents into visual protests, whether as personal reflections or as contributions to the fiercely satirical journals which flourished at this time. Serov painted his celebrated work *Soldiers, Brave Fellows, Where Now is Your Glory?* (1905, Ill.68), a laconic but impassioned composition conveying the sense of a crowd being born down upon by a legion of sabre-wielding troops, whilst in reality depicting very few figures. But apart from this, two drawings, *Harvest*, showing rifles stacked like bales of hay, and *The Year 1905. After Quelling a Riot*, a cartoon depicting the decoration of soldiers beside the bodies of shot demonstrators, appear to be Serov's only other, very private, reflections on the disaster.¹⁷¹ Amongst Repin's pupils Boris Kustodiev, Isaak Brodsky and Ivan Bilibin, worked for the journals *Red Laughter*, *Hell's Post*, *Bugbear* and *The Hobgoblin*, and were joined by other notable names, such as P. Dobrynin, M. Dobuzhinsky and E. Lansere.¹⁷²

Sergei Ivanov at this time painted his picture *Massacre* (1905, Ill.69) which, like Serov's painting, uses sparse composition and an expressive technique to even greater effect, vividly evoking the imminent disaster.

Makovsky's reaction to Bloody Sunday was as direct as it had been to Khodynka, resulting in a large canvas depicting the people *en masse: 9 January 1905 on Vasilevsky Island*, (1905, Ill.70), showing the moment when the order was given to fire on the unarmed crowd. The first dead, men, women, children, the elderly, have already fallen, leaving patches of blood on the snow. The central, dramatic figure of

the man tearing open his shirt to present his chest to the bullets is followed by a student, gesturing to the crowd, trying to tell them what is happening at the front. A woman has fallen to her knees in terror, clutching a child to herself. Another defends her small son, covering his head with her hands. The crowd, a mixture of ordinary people, students and workers, react with both fear and courage, presenting a mixture of tragedy and heroism.

But this was very much a private painting, shown only to close friends and worked on secretly. It was never shown in Makovsky's lifetime, being first exhibited in 1922, two years after his death.¹⁷³ The artist nevertheless felt the need to exorcise his horror with such a forceful visual image. And such was the case with Repin, who expressed both concern, and outrage at the shootings and, despite being now in his early sixties and suffering health problems which forced him to paint with his left hand, was galvanised into a fresh bout of creative activity.

Whilst stopping short of resignation Repin was anxious to make some positive contribution to the demands for reform. In March, in the company of 113 artists, he signed a petition demanding a judicial and administrative government via elections of all the people: "for the immediate and complete renovation of our state system."¹⁷⁴ Though this was not an extreme political course, Repin ardently supported the call for political concessions from the Tsar. He had told Stasov in March:

"I intentionally went to sign the declaration by the Russian artists a week ago, but it had been put aside for amendment to the wording of the text. I told both Bryullov and Makovsky that I was ready to sign a hundred times over, with both hands, a similar proclamation, today; and that I will sign under any kind of wording."¹⁷⁵

Repin also sent support to Rimsky-Korsakov, who had been excluded from a professorship at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire on the grounds of his sympathies with revolutionary members amongst the students.

"I have sent Rimsky-Korsakov a telegram. What a hero he is! How I admire him; and Glazunov and Lyadov too, the most noble of hearts and minds! And Ziloti - I am delighted."¹⁷⁶

In the same letter he makes reference to Serov's resignation, which he had heard of only from press reports, and far from condemning the action outright merely commented: "Very interesting!"¹⁷⁷ Letters at this time show a thirst for news and a desire, somehow, to be in the thick of things, and he was not ambivalent about where he placed the political guilt.

"It is impossible for anyone with a European education to sincerely support this ridiculous autocracy, which has lost all meaning in our complicated life. This antediluvian method of government is suitable only for primitive tribes, incapable of culture."¹⁷⁸

In a letter to Stasov he blasted the ineptitude and stupidity of Nicholas II, calling him: "our stupid swine, the Scythian-barbarian..."¹⁷⁹ A similar image for the Tsar was employed following the destruction of the Russian Baltic fleet by the Japanese in May: "And who is responsible?...The government and their leader...His Excebullyency [Высокодержимордие]."¹⁸⁰

In February Repin was at Stasov's house, where he heard the sculptor Ilya Gintsberg read from his notebooks about the shooting of the Bloody Sunday demonstrators, and the eye-witness account clearly made an impression on him. He told Ivan Tolstoy, one of the prime participants in Alexander III's reformation of the Academy, and, in 1905, Minister for National Education:

"How can the autocracy hold its ground in this environment of khanate traditions?! Yes, the government is behind the times, stupid and ready only for a complete downfall."¹⁸¹

In all his correspondence at this time Repin expresses a deep-rooted anger over the unwarranted killings, and his continuing frustration with the ever more disastrous performance of the Tsar and his ministers. Nor was this a temporary reaction forged in the heat of moral outrage. Over a year later he broke off his friendship with the poet Zhirkevich who sent him some material from the magazine *Дыр*, edited by P. A. Krushevan, a well known organiser of pogroms in his capacity as a member of the notorious reactionary thugs, The Black Hundreds. In a rousing rebuke, in which he told Zhirkevich: "I immediately threw the book on the fire," Repin affirmed his thanks

that "yesterday's lackeys" were being swept away by the efforts of "heroes of the people".¹⁸²

There is no doubting that, far from a weak indifference or dithering indecisiveness, Repin showed a lively interest in events surrounding the volatile political climate of 1905. It is true that he instigated no daring initiatives, but then neither did any other of his artistic brethren, and Serov's bold and ethical resignation remained a unique gesture. In November of 1905 Repin did resign from the Academy, and though this was not directly as a result of the shootings in January, it seems hardly coincidental that his dissatisfaction with the institution should come to a head in the same year.

Of the events surrounding the shootings Repin painted no major canvas, though this is not unusual. With the exception of portrait commissions he finished very few of the projects he undertook after the *State Council*, as bad health and bouts of artistic prevarication saw various schemes undertaken, only to be curtailed or consistently re-painted with disastrous results. One such was *The Liberation of Rus*, on which Repin began work in November 1905. The idea, a pendant to the *State Council*, was suggested by Stasov, and was to have depicted Siberian scenes, prisons and fortresses, such as Schlüsselburg and Petropavlosk, ordinary people and workers, and a collection of Russian intellectual notables and liberators. In response to Repin's request for suggestions¹⁸³ Stasov sent a list of 71 fighters for national freedom, including the writers Radischev, Belinsky, Dobrolyubov, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Pisarev, Tolstoy and Gorky, the surgeon N. I. Pirogov, the revolutionaries Lavrov and Peter Kropotkin, and the politician G. V. Plekhanov. According to Stasov the work was to represent "the agonies of our times."¹⁸⁴

Repin had misgivings about the work, chiefly its ambitious theme and daunting scale, but pressed ahead, calling it "our painting".¹⁸⁵ But doubts as to the viability of the venture, and of his ability to see it through, meant that on Stasov's death, in October 1906, he let the work drop, not it seems out of cultural and political disinterest, but merely on the grounds of practicability.

Other works pertaining to 1905 and the aftermath of strikes,

demonstrations and disturbances, include *Breaking Up a Demonstration*, *At the Tsar's Hangings* (both Museum of the Revolution, Moscow, 1905), and *1905 (Shooting at the Demonstration. The Bloody Sunday)*, which exists in both ink and an oil variation (respectively Penaty, Museum of the Revolution, Moscow, 1905). All show a commitment to recording contemporary upheavals in a passionate and spontaneous fashion but none, unfortunately, progressed beyond the sketch stage. *1905 (Shooting at the Demonstration. The Bloody Sunday)* bears some resemblance to Makovsky's painting of the same theme, and the main character, who falls to his knees appealing to the humanity of the unseen executioners, appears to have been lifted directly from Goya's *The Third of May: Shooting of the Spaniards by the French on May 3, 1808* (Prado, 1814).

In oils Repin painted *The Red Funeral* (Museum of the Revolution, Moscow, 1905-1906), a very rough, wild sketch of a funeral oration given to a sea of red shirts, blouses, flags and banners. It is interesting to note that whilst Repin invariably spurned the use of symbolism in preference for literal depictions of actual events, he was not slow to discern the imagery employed by others. *The Red Funeral*, with its impasted, animated sea of crimson, has obvious similarities with *The Whirlwind* by Filipp Malyavin, (Tretyakov Gallery, 1906), a pupil of Repin's, depicting a swirling, joyous, predominantly red vision of peasant women dancing. Repin much admired its spirit of optimism and life, calling it "The most dazzling painting on the Revolutionary movement in Russia."¹²⁶

Only one painting at this time was completed, and without much satisfaction. *The Manifestation on 17 October 1905* (1907-1911, Ill. 71) was begun in 1906 following Nicholas's proclamation which contained concessions towards freedom of speech, conscience, association, an injunction on unwarranted arrests, and the establishment of an elected assembly, the Duma. However flawed the October Manifesto turned out to be it was a concession in the face of centuries of absolute and holy rule by the monarchy, and was greeted as a significant victory.

An atmosphere of jubilant mass celebration predominates the first sketch of 1906¹²⁷ but the finished work is more purposeful, concentrating on specific, recognisable social representatives:

student, worker, progressive woman, youths, cadets, a revolutionary and a member of the intelligentsia. The revolutionary and poet, N.A. Morozov, served as the model for the newly released convict who heads the parade, whilst another prisoner of the notorious Schlüsselburg fortress, G.A. Lopatin, is seen in the background, applauding Morozov.¹⁸⁸

By Repin's own exacting standards the quality of painting is very weak and the emotions too forced and self-consciously heroic to be convincing. The spirit of the work, however, was undoubtedly an inspiration to Repin's pupil Kustodiev, and lives on in the latter's patriotic work *Festivities Marking the Opening of the 2nd Congress of the Comintern in Palace Square in Petrograd* (Russian Museum, 1921).

Repin's preoccupation with political revolutionary events during these years resulted in some unusual and seemingly doomed schemes, including, for instance, a portrait of the long dead Chernyshevsky and, again not from life, a portrait of Vera Zasulich, both of which proved unfeasible.¹⁸⁹

In the graphic sphere he was busy with a number of projects though, so far as is known, did not contribute to the ubiquitous illegal journals. He did work on a related book illustration, a series of dark, foreboding scenes, completed in 1908 for Leonid Andreyev's *Story of the Seven Who Were Hanged*.¹⁹⁰ Variants for the jacket and frontispieces exist, but they are again not of his best work, being too overtly dramatic, vying with, instead of complementing the text.¹⁹¹

Far more forceful are a number of watercolours of 1906, accompanying the poems of the former Narodnaya volya revolutionary, N.A. Morozov, released from the Schlüsselburg Prison (the same prison in which Vera Figner was incarcerated), at the end of 1905, after 28 years. In the company of a number of political and artistic figures, including Rimsky-Korsakov, Repin was a member of the Schlüsselburg Committee, established to help former detainees.¹⁹² In 1906 Morozov and his wife were guests at Penaty, where Repin learned that N.E. Paramonov, whose *Donskaya rech* was flooding the market with thousands of uncensored revolutionary brochures, planned to release a small volume of Morozov's prison verses. Repin volunteered to design the

jacket for Morozov's poems, initially hoping to depict the poet in his cell,¹⁹³ but eventually settling on a design showing a young, weak woman, kneeling by candlelight, the picture framed by huge chains with the legend *Schlüsselburg Motifs*. Still lower appeared the impregnable island fortress.

He subsequently produced two variations for Morozov's *Schlüsselburg Prisoner*. The first, unpublished, showed a half-crazed prisoner pressed to the bars of his cell. A view of the prison occupies the lower half of the composition which is framed once more by a border of heavy chains and funereal-looking crows.¹⁹⁴ Both this and the published version make use of identical elements but the final work manages to be less sombre, more sympathetic. They were produced in dark-hued watercolours and added white, applied with a brush, rather than a pen, giving an unusual painterly feel to the images. Though none were bitter or acidic, as were the majority of Schlüsselburg images which appeared in the illegal journals,¹⁹⁵ the first variant is a strong, if slightly deranged image, suggestive, like Repin's revolutionary paintings, of idealistic suffering.

An area related to these artistic concerns, but one which occupied Repin only seldom, was the image of the worker, which, though it had been part of the Peredvizhnik repertoire, was given a new and dynamic lease of life after 1905. The very depiction of urban workers, new members of the revolutionary pantheon, carried political overtones since, rightly or wrongly, they were considered politically aware, and were certainly politically active. Without doubt the strongest proponent of this genre was Nikolai Kasatkin (1859-1930), who in the 1890s worked on a cycle of mining pictures which are still quite unique in their forceful, uncompromising depiction of the rigours of working life. *Miners. The Shift* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1895), for which Kasatkin executed many studies, both strong and pitiful, is a hellish depiction of a modern day industrial Inferno which has lost little of its power in nearly a hundred years.¹⁹⁶

But these were not the politicised workers of the early 1900s, and during these years, and beyond, Kasatkin turned to a string of oil paintings which, through their titles alone, show a strength of committed political interest: *After the Inspection* (1905), *The*

Bayonets Last Plunge, A Sacrifice of the Revolution without Testament (1905), *Fighting Worker* (1905) and *Working Women Attacking a Factory* (1905).¹⁹⁷

The urban worker was not a theme with which Repin occupied himself. In 1885 he painted an exception to this rule, *Road-builders Resting* (Kirov Art Museum), an unusual work which shows a group of ragged, sleeping workers, stretched out by the roadside in awkward, ungainly poses. Splayed out, arms and legs twisted into contortionate forms, one clutching his chest as if shot, an allusion to death, as it appears in Henry Wallis's *The Stonebreaker*, or Perov's *Pilgrim in a Field. On the Way to Eternal Bliss*, seems inescapable.¹⁹⁸

The Liberation of Rus, which was to have depicted the various emerging social-revolutionary categories, possibly prompted Repin to paint a pair of portraits of members of the Labourist faction of the Duma, *Trudovik* and *The Trudovik's Wife*, (both Russian Museum, 1907). Both portraits, admirably stolid and 'of the people', differ very little from his peasant portraits, having both individuality and integrity, but stripped of their titles there is nothing to suggest a political connection and there seems scant ground for comparing it with Kasatkin's *Fighting Worker* (Боевик) as amongst "the most enduring images of the time."¹⁹⁹

Repin's works executed at the time of Bloody Sunday, and during the political struggles, appeasements, and eruptions which followed, are clearly not of his best. Nor is there anything which unites them programmatically or party politically. It would not be fair to say, however, that he took scant interest in events, or that he made no protest, written or painted, on the violence and intransigence of the time. Indeed these years mark a period of increased activity on both fronts, but tragically as he got older, and ever more works suggested themselves to his fertile imagination, fewer and fewer were ever finished.

During the first decade of the twentieth century Repin's best work was already behind him, but as an artist he tried to come to terms with contemporary events in the best way he knew, through his art. The decline in technical ability can be attributed to health problems, whilst the lack of artistic or ideological homogeneity should be

attributed to political confusion, rather than naivety. Shifts in political stances, factionalising, power-broking, the constantly changing face of ideologies and nomenclature, was surpassed only by the Gordian knot of interlinking and diverging schools, cliques, factions and manifestos that constituted the art world of the early 1900s. Repin, as a simple "man of the sixties", clearly had his work cut out trying to keep pace with both, and the second, the artistic revolution, was after all his real province.

The October Revolution 1917: attitudes towards Communism

Repin's reaction to the October Revolution of 1917 is considered here as a postscript, since this period of his life is dealt with in the final chapter. This was a time of divorcement from Russia when he obsessively reworked recurrent themes: Cossack scenes, religious paintings, works depicting Pushkin. A few however bore relationship to matters political.

After 1907, except for occasional travels, Repin retired to his Finnish home Penaty. When the Revolution broke he was seventy three years old and physically cut off from events. Lauded by the new regime, later in the shape of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR), heirs to a new and strictly politically-tendentious realist school, Repin found himself the centre of yet another controversy.²⁰⁰ The AKhRR, principally through the efforts of one of their leading painters, Isaak Brodsky, a former pupil of Repin's, sought to append the older artist's prestigious name to the newly created school and efforts were made to bestow on him the honour of 'People's Artist of the USSR', thus claiming him for the cause.

This was nothing new in Russian art; Stasov's life-long efforts to keep Repin's career on the democratic-nationalist path were done in a similar vein. But whether working on peasant or revolutionary paintings, which pleased the radicals, or on state commissions, which comforted the conservatives, at grass roots Repin was considered a 'Russian' artist (in this respect at least Stasov had been successful), and to embrace the communist regime was, in the eyes of many, certainly the Russian emigre community, a betrayal of Russia.

Once more Repin was caught between political and artistic

considerations. During the early 1900s, and especially the 1910s, he had been the subject of scathing abuse from the modernist trends, all of whom he referred to contemptuously as 'Futurists'. To see a lifetime's earnest endeavour swept aside by a new generation, scornful of his artistic and ethical beliefs, was a distressing business, and Repin reacted with a mixture of anger and imprudence which found outlet in a series of outspoken articles and reviews. Artistically, if only from pique, he felt inclined to endorse Brodsky's grand, revolutionary-patriotic canvases,²⁰¹ since the cultural free-for-all, ushered in by the events of 1917, had seen the ascendancy of trends which he considered detrimental to art.

It seemed for a while that Repin would embrace the cause wholeheartedly. At the end of June, 1926, a delegation of Russian artists, sent on behalf of Lunacharsky's Ministry of Education, visited Kuokkala with a view to persuading him to return to the USSR.²⁰² An assurance from Marshal Voroshilov that Repin's financial welfare would be assured, and that the nation would be honoured by his return, seems genuinely to have touched the artist,²⁰³ but he remained in Finland. Possibly his decision was influenced by the emigre furore which erupted over his connections with the Bolshevik government,²⁰⁴ but the prosaic truth seems that at 82 he was too old, tired and attached to a home where he had already made provision to be buried.²⁰⁵

Repin's writings of this time tend to be fragmented, laconic, dealing with matters close to hand: unfinished projects, his ill health, accounts of visitors arriving or departing. He clearly had contacts with the new regime which so urgently wanted to enlist his services (Lenin is purported to have sanctioned the credo of Rembrandt, Rubens and Repin),²⁰⁶ and by now could find common ground in his antipathy towards autocracy, but since all editions of the artist's letters and correspondence have been issued during the height of communist hegemony, one has to ask whether the picture is complete. The rapid internal thawings now taking place within the USSR, which have allowed the rehabilitation and publication of previously untouchable writers, might yet throw up some surprises in the artistic field, the signs for which are propitious.

Two letters by the artist were recently re-published in Estonia,

suggesting serious discrepancies of thinking to those commonly encountered in Soviet works. Both were published in Tallinn in 1920, then a busy emigre community. One of these, dated to April, and addressed to Vadim Anofriev, an Estonian journalist on the Russian magazine *Mir*, was published in Tallinn's *Evening Post* on 29 May 1920, long before the Soviet delegation tried to tempt the artist back to the USSR, and show an early disillusionment with the Revolution, describing a recent, personal "change":

"When our church excommunicated Leo Tolstoy I gave my word never to cross the threshold of a church, but when the thieving mob came into power, breaking up and desecrating all of the people's sacred objects, defiling the churches, I returned to the church and even stood up to join the choir in singing (here in Kuokkolo) [sic]. And now I am discovering that the church is a great standard of the people and that nobody has ever brought the people together as the church has. Our out-and-out criminals, robbers, now ceremonially declare from platforms that there is no God. 'The pig asserted that the blue sky does not exist: he had never seen it'.

And what are they giving the people in place of God and the church? At present Lenin and Trotsky are replacing these with their 'extraordinary commissions' [i.e. of the Cheka] and their blasphemous prancings on top of the Christians whom they have plundered. Oh, they will pay dearly for their boorocracy [хамодержавие]. Having done with capitalists and imperialists they now rule the cattle unboundedly. But not only they themselves, the apostles of communism, but even the most ignorant peasants, now mock communism and its sermons, having experienced its bankruptcy. 'Religion is the opium of the masses'. Yes, a moral opium and communion as dear to them as flesh and blood...

Yes, in these primitive prayers, in majestic forms which have served for thousands of years, there is so much beauty: the souls which were inspired by religion and created canons to God were full of profound truths, sacrificing themselves entirely to religion... Yes, that is the principle of religion, that the highest attainment is to sacrifice one's life. Can some bully really suppress this very 'holy of holies' with his 'petty prohibitions'? How blind! Why it is not so long ago that the raskolniks went to their deaths, burning themselves in contempt for the autocrat, over nothing more than corrections to corrupt texts. Is it then possible that ignorant louts will compel them to renounce God?!.... We have sunk to this!!"²⁰⁷

The same letter includes sharp criticism of Gorky, with whom Repin had been particularly close during the early 1900s, but whom he now regarded as corrupting his talent by writing "pulp literature". The

sharp discrepancy between these sentiments and the Soviet 'official version' is intriguing, and throws up many questions on Repin's political allegiances after 1917.

A consideration of the paintings produced by Repin leaves one little the wiser, and for much the same reasons. Very little literature has been devoted to this, the latter and weakest part of the artist's career, and even Soviet publications, eager to claim him as an ardent precursor of Soviet Socialist Realism, have barely addressed these years nor reproduced the works in question. This, unfortunately, has been due to a rigid historical artistic hierarchy which regards the Peredvizhniki as anticipating, but not surpassing, the scientific objectivity of Soviet Realism.

"The limited conception of the world possessed by most of the Itinerants can be explained by their ignorance of the laws that govern the development of society. Neither were they aware of the correct, scientifically valid path that alone could lead to social progress in the true meaning of the word. Nevertheless, by participating in the democratic movement of their time they too fought for the cause of historical progress."²⁰⁸

The glory of the Revolutionary period belongs to the AKhRR, and scant attention is given to other than the occasional word of support offered by the older generation of artists. Amongst Repin's letters of this period there are references to works in progress, but merely in passing, and these are not elucidated in spirit, nor, apparently, were they finished in body. *Into the Attack with a Nursing Sister* (Russian Museum, 1917), done in both sketch and oil versions, shows soldiers, bayonets drawn, entering battle, a young nurse standing bravely with them under fire. There is some confusion as to its date, some writers placing it as 1914, and therefore an episode from World War I, whilst more recently it has been endorsed as a scene from the 1917 uprising.²⁰⁹

Amongst other works, *The Cattle of Imperialism*, a modern variant of *Burlaki*, was painted immediately after the Revolution, and when the artist was attacked by an anonymous correspondent he put up a spirited defence of the tendentiousness of the subject matter, accusing the writer of being his new censor and, ironically, endorsing the revolution as the first step towards an equitable republic.²¹⁰ What

form the painting took, how ardently pro-revolutionary, humanitarian or anti-autocratic was the content, only the title gives a clue. Despite being prime fodder for Soviet art history it has not been reproduced.²¹¹ Neither is anything known of the tantalising titles *Bolsheviks* and *The Starving Comrade*, both works in production in 1920.²¹²

There were also ambitious plans, visualised by Brodsky, for Repin to paint a large, apocalyptic canvas on the evils of the monarchy, simply titled *Autocracy*. The scheme envisaged a throne room decorated with human bones and littered with bodies, and the execution of a female student presided over by an official ("like Pobedonotsev") and sanctioned by a sumptuously dressed cleric. But after criticisms about its propriety Repin went on the defensive, claiming he had never been a monarchist, and that to paint the commission was not a condonation of Bolshevism.²¹³ Eventually Repin's son Yuri worked on the commission, and though Repin expressed regret at not being physically fit enough to join him in Leningrad, he showed sympathy with the theme and the Museum's cause.²¹⁴

A rare finished, exhibited, and extant work from this period, is the portrait of Alexander Kerensky, (1917, Ill. 72).²¹⁵ It was painted from life sketches made during sittings in Nicholas II's study in the Winter Palace, where on at least one occasion Brodsky also sat in and drew.²¹⁶ According to the artist A. V. Grigoryev, a member of the delegation which visited Repin in 1926, and who had been given funds by Narkompros to purchase some of Repin's works, the suggestion for its acquisition came from the artist,²¹⁷ and it was subsequently deposited in the Museum of the Revolution in Moscow. Repin told Grigoryev that when he first met Kerensky the conviction had grown in him that he was a "socialist imposter", and so he juxtaposed the sunlight, representing joy, with Kerensky, sitting in the gloom, portrayed as "neurasthenic", with dull eyes and a vague look: "He was an imposter, I was convinced of it."²¹⁸

This account is backed-up by other members of the delegation, P. E. Bezrukikh quotes Repin as saying: "Ah, what a pity I painted that scoundrel and chatterbox Kerensky...that shallow, petty swindler, that fraud, his head befuddled with idle chatter: made a mess, and then ran

off with his tail between his legs."²¹⁹ Katsman recalled Repin's remark: "Here was a man who had the power of an emperor almost, but he seemed such a nonentity."²²⁰

One might normally be inclined to take this antipathy towards the by then reviled Kerensky, with a pinch of salt, a retrospective political wisdom, but there is no denying that the portrait is a most unflattering and demonic apparition. The sitter's face is shielded by darkness, only the eyes, framed like the mouth with red, shine with reptilian sharpness in the gloom, whilst the brilliant sunlight, issuing from the left, just catches the top of his head, but fully illuminates the incongruous hands, one sheathed in a black glove, the other bare.

The style of the work, thickly painted, largely with pure colours which have mixed on the canvas, and thrown down with seemingly wild abandon, is, conversely, rather pleasing. The tapering composition, from Kerensky's wide hips to his narrow shoulders and small head, all serve to emphasise the quality of physical insignificance. In the light of his outspoken observations about Kerensky, and his vicious remarks about Lenin, Trotsky and the failure of communism in 1920, one can only surmise whether, in 1926, in need of financial assistance, Repin might have wished to heap similar scorn on the delegation's masters, but had by then found the gift of verbal prudence.

There is really no clear, consistent view which emerges from Repin's canvases and writings on the October Revolution and life under communism; in both the picture is simply too patchy. The outburst in the letters to his Estonian correspondent is remarkable, but one would need to see more in this line before concluding that it was a consistent mode of thought. Similarly, the warm commendations of Brodsky and the AKhRR, which are possibly selective, are strongly suggestive of an artistic inclination towards the upholders of the realist tradition, rather than the communist ideology. It was on these grounds he defended his interest in the bellicose project for the canvas *Autocracy*, and it was on artistic, not political grounds, (in particular the advances being made by the 'Futurists'), that Brodsky appealed for Repin's support. Whilst it is known that Repin received the first volume of Lenin's collected works he made only a brief,

enigmatic comment, tagged to the end of a letter as an after-thought: "I am reading it all and getting to understand this man."²²¹ And then silence.

As to the works themselves, Kerensky's portrait is powerfully and convincingly antipathetic, but it is symptomatic of the artistic hierarchy discussed above that even such an unfavourable image of one of the Soviet Union's most denigrated political figures, supported by insulting remarks from her most revered artist, still cannot find its way into Soviet art histories. The Revolutionary period and beyond is strictly the province of the AKhRR, and in this climate it is small wonder that information is too often scarce or unreliable. And with regards to other works with socialist overtones: *The Cattle of Imperialism*, *Bolsheviks*, *The Starving Comrade*, *Manifesto*, one can only ask - where are they?

Observations on the political content or ideological ethos of the works discussed in this chapter must be of a broad nature. In the course of an active career spanning seventy years or more there is ample time and space for political fluctuation or ethical inconsistencies, some of which are apparent. There is, clearly, an ambivalence in an artist who is considered by his peers as part of the liberal, reformist camp, who paints bleak, economical, veristic revolutionary scenes, yet appeals concurrently to more conservative minds, and sees works like *Burlaki* and *Seeing Off a Recruit* disappear into the collection of the President of the Imperial Academy, ostensibly the body in opposition to the liberal *Peredvizhniki*. Similarly, to work on *Alexander III Receives the District Headmen* at the same time as *Ivan the Terrible*, which so forcefully expressed the artist's horror of contemporary political extremism that it was withdrawn from exhibition by the Tsar's censorship, suggests that the ideological lines of Repin's career simply cannot be drawn in a clear cut fashion.

It is necessary nevertheless to keep in perspective how rigidly uncompromising were the times during which Repin worked. The years of reaction following Alexander II's assassination, though severely limiting artistic expression, were but a further tightening of an

already asphyxiating cultural climate. Though there was not total freedom of expression abroad, where artists, as today, were at least bound by laws regarding blasphemy, decency and the like,²²² in Russia the system was run very much on a catch-all basis: if in doubt, censor. In these circumstances an honest protest could be regarded as scandalous, a mild protest, a brave act of defiance.

Even within the context of autocratic censorship many of Repin's works were both honest and outspoken commentaries of contemporary life, and whether or not one cares to dissect the sociological reasons, the fact remains that to his contemporaries Repin's name was synonymous with politically outspoken subject matter. Benois recalls how, as a young man, there would be "uproar" at the dining table when his "progressive" uncle expressed approval of a new work by Repin, Surikov, Makovsky or Savitsky, and how his own family, believing that art outside of the Academy was a destructive influence, labelled these painters "nihilists", the ultimate term of abuse.²²³ Clearly, amongst similarly affluent, conservative households, Repin's standing was much the same.

Though he was claimed for the 'cause', Repin's independent turn of mind exasperated Stasov at every turn, whether by appreciating the 'wrong' artists, rejoining the Academy, tackling the wrong subjects, or espousing art for art's sake. Thus, for instance, there is little beyond the fact that Repin consistently painted the Russian scene, that will fit him into the category which Stasov tried so hard to press upon him, that of a nationalist painter. Repin's letters are everywhere punctuated with nationalist sentiment, not as part of a consistent, conscious blue print for the arts, as it was with Stasov,²²⁴ but merely the inherent patriotism which all Russians were heirs to: the liberals and the conservatives were possessed of it, so too were the Slavophiles and the Westernisers, and so too were Tolstoy and Pobedonostsev. However their philosophies differed, all espoused the interests of Russia, and all, in their own way, were patriots. In this respect dozens of quotations could be lifted from Repin's writings which would support his ardent nationalist sentiments, but except when Stasov's heavy hand was particularly in evidence these were never chauvinistic nor narrowly conceived.²²⁵ The recurrent

strain of humanism, which permeates both Repin's peasant and revolutionary genres, his sympathetic understanding of personal plight, are the major consistencies in the artist's work, and beyond general terminology – liberal, democratic, progressive – they cannot be pinned down to party political lines.

Whilst the spiritual side of his development would not allow him to fully relinquish the emotional input discarded by the realist practise of objective data collecting, his inclination for reality, concreteness, inclined him to that half of Courbet's manifesto which insisted on a lack of idealisation or unobserved phenomena, and an adherence to the literal: "I have always pursued the essence: body as body."²²⁶ Certainly, with perhaps the exception of *Ivan the Terrible*, Repin was at his weakest outside of these confines.

Maxim Gorky, with whom Repin was on close terms towards the end of the 19th century, and at the time of the revolution of 1905, a man not disinclined to political or social sermonising, praised the artist's work as being free from narrow political concerns, and for pursuing a persistently broad celebration of life's many manifestations.²²⁷

But if Repin's work cannot be pinned down to a specific political viewpoint he nevertheless did not stand aloof from politics – matters pertaining to public affairs – unless a keen interest with social phenomena, and a concern for the fates of the individuals caught up in contemporary events does not come under this heading. His works were not intended as introverted reflections, though often they served this dual function. The artistic climate of 19th century Russia demanded active participation, and Repin painted consistently with a public in mind. Though their understanding of the ultimate purpose of art differed, Repin could concur with Tolstoy on its aims. If art was a means of expression and communication then it was only logical that one should seek to express and communicate things of the utmost import, and not mere trifles: "Truth above all else", as Repin proclaimed his belief to Tretyakov.²²⁸

Art, as it accorded with Courbet and Chernyshevsky, could not therefore be an end in itself, but a means to something higher even than art. For Tolstoy this was morality, for Chernyshevsky it was life, for Repin too it was life, but not merely a detached

documentation of contemporary facts, nor, as with a painter like Levitan, with the concrete manifestations of nature, but with the human condition. Stasov's comparison between Repin and Millet, as artist's pre-eminently embroiled in considerations of human existence, is perhaps the most fitting.²²⁹ Works by Repin in which the human figure does not appear are so rare as to be quite remarkable.

Repin might not have deluded himself that his art alone would effect social change, but it never occurred to him to divorce himself from social, and therefore, inevitably, political subjects. As he himself remarked of the sixties' ethos, to which, in the long term, he maintained allegiance, pictures in those days made the spectator "blush, shiver, and look carefully into himself...They disturbed society and directed it to the path of humaneness."²³⁰ But it was only as an artist that he could fully express himself and his devotion to this, his means of expression, overrode all ideological concerns. Even when re-affirming his dedication to an ethically based art, following his divorcement from Stasov in the 1890s, he acknowledged that only through his work could he find meaning, and that consequently this took precedence over all else:

"...I am just the same as I ever was, as in my earliest youth, I love light, love truth, love goodness, and beauty as the very best gifts in our life. And especially art!...Nothing in this world...can help me if I am unsuccessful in my work."²³¹

* * * * *

CHAPTER 6

Portraiture

The quite outstanding body of portraits produced by the Peredvizhniki has, quite rightly, been considered the school's finest achievement, fixing for posterity definitive images of Russia's intellectual and cultural élite. Though a succession of talented individuals contributed to his pantheon of Slavic culture, the decision by Pavel Tretyakov to establish a collection of contemporary notables was undoubtedly the most important influence on portrait painting in the second half of the 19th century.

Always a popular art form with no shortage of wealthy patrons, Russian portraiture up to the 1860s displayed, by and large, a steady stream of imposing or decorative royals and artistocrats, the fine peasant portraits of Venetsianov being far from typical. The genre of professional 'types', surrounded by the accessories of their trades, epitomised in the works of V.A. Tropinin, was also prevalent, but images of writers and thinkers were noticeably absent, Kiprensky's romantic portrayal of Pushkin (Tretyakov Gallery, 1827) remaining something of an exception.

The reforming 1860s saw no shortage of intellectual heroes, but whilst artists were industriously indulging in social exposé, and the peasant portrait was achieving artistic autonomy, few depictions were produced of the thinkers who inspired their efforts. Ge painted Alexander Herzen (Tretyakov Gallery, 1867), with whom he made contact whilst in Italy,¹ but this remained an aberration until Tretyakov's conscious decision to amass a body of Russian portraits precipitated an explosion of earnest, serious minded depictions of celebrated national figures.

Prior to 1869 Tretyakov had been a keen collector of portraits by Russian masters such as Borovikovsky, Bryullov, Levitsky and Kiprensky, acquired chiefly on the grounds of the artist rather than the sitter, but from 1869-1870 onwards he began seriously collecting and commissioning works on the basis of whom they depicted.² At the first Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1871 Ge exhibited his portrait of

Turgenev and Perov showed a portrait of the playwright Ostrovsky.³ The following year saw portraits of Saltykov-Shchedrin and Nekrasov by Ge, and by Perov of Turgenev, the poet Maikov, and, still regarded as one of the greatest achievements of Russian portraiture, his psychologically incisive image of the gaunt and pensive Dostoevsky (1872, Ill. 73). The trend, bolstered by Tretyakov's acquisitions, was quickly established and each succeeding exhibition saw fresh, often powerfully laconic images of Russian celebrities, many from the brushes of Repin.

In a sense these specific, personal incarnations, were the obverse but complimentary side of the generic peasant portraits, symbolising twin aspects of the Russian character: the type – an embodiment of national traits and values, and the individual – moral, cultural and intellectual exemplars of Russian achievement. Some of these have already been touched upon, Repin's peasant portraits and *The Archdeacon* fitting into the first category, and the unsuccessful portrait of Turgenev, commissioned by Tretyakov whilst Repin was in Paris, aspiring to the second. Regrettably, this discussion must be confined to general observations via specific examples since Repin's output in this genre, from early family portraits to works executed during the final year of his life, was quite phenomenal. A far from comprehensive list compiled by Igor Grabar in 1937 identified 279 portraits, and many more have since come to light.⁴

A brief check-list of eminent sitters will give some idea of Repin's scope. In the field of literature he painted Tolstoy, Stasov, Turgenev, Garshin, Fet, Pisemsky, Leskov, Remizov, Gorky, Andreyev and Mayakovsky,⁵ of his brother artists he portrayed Antokolsky, Bogolyubov, Brodsky, Ge, Kramskoy, Kuindzhi, Myasoyedov, Polenov, Serov, Shishkin, Surikov, and Viktor Vasnetsov, as well as artistic patrons Tretyakov, Savva Mamontov, and various members of both their families. From the world of music Repin immortalised Borodin, Cui, Glazunov, Glinka, Liszt, Lyadov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mitrofan Belyaev, Pavel Blaramberg, Anton Rubinstein, Aleksandr Verzhbilovich and Fyodor Shalyapin.⁶ And these are just the tip of an iceberg which includes academics, lawyers, doctors, architects, and other notable professionals such as the psychiatrist Vladimir Bekhterev, the physicist and scholar Ivan Pavlov, the surgeon and professor at the

Military Medical Academy Yevgeny Pavlov, the surgeon and anatomist Nikolai Pirogov and the research chemist Dmitry Mendeleev.⁷

Treatment of subject matter. Portrait of Modest Musorgsky

Repin's naturalistic treatment of portrait subjects varied little, regardless of whether he depicted peasants, intellectuals or nobility, and with very rare exceptions he always strove for a sincere, unidealised representation that was not always appreciated. Despite limitations in the realist style, which too easily resulted in vapid, photographic likenesses, he largely avoided the pitfalls of bland naturalism to breath into his works a force of personality, whether benign or, as in the case of Pobedonostsev and Kerensky, critical. His portrait of Modest Musorgsky (1881, Ill.74) is generally considered the highspot in this genre and is a fine example for considering Repin's treatment of subjects.

Repin saw Musorgsky during the last days of his life when, as a former military cadet, he was lodged at the Nikolayevsky War Hospital. After an earlier period of illness, when he rallied and became optimistic, planning new works, Musorgsky succumbed to the alcohol abuse with which he had sought to keep emotional problems at bay.⁸ Repin had always been on very intimate terms with the composer, whose candour and almost child-like naivety he found most appealing. He rarely forgot to ask after the composer when writing to Stasov from Paris and was alarmed to find that he was seriously ill in February of 1881.⁹ Sensing that the musician was unlikely to survive Repin set about painting an equally candid tribute to both a friend and a man of national significance, completing the work in only four sittings, between 4-5 March, in Musorgsky's sick room.

The weather was good and the tall hospital windows gave excellent light, but the room was cramped, too small for an easel, and Repin had to improvise by placing his canvas on a small table, in front of which sat Musorgsky, in a military dressing gown with crimson velvet lapels, the decoration on his embroidered nightshirt just visible. Stasov records that soon after the portrait was finished Musorgsky entered a more extreme, and eventually terminal phase of his illness, dying less than two weeks later.¹⁰ A combination of fortuitous timing and

personal devotion to his subject allowed Repin to capture an image of the composer which shows him balanced between normality and physical degeneration, clearly suffering the effects of a dissolute lifestyle, yet retaining a spark of animation and decency in his tousled state of undress.

Stasov regarded Musorgsky's death as a great loss to Russian culture, viewing his work as profoundly national and progressive, the opposite of all that was conservative, and in a whole series of articles he propounded and praised his originality and individuality.¹¹ For Stasov the portrait was both a revelation and proof of his faith in Repin's national, realistic talents, which, he felt, were a visual compliment to Musorgsky's work. His praise was unstinting but his reception of the portrait is a good example of how Stasov's unique brand of selective journalism, though often well intentioned, back-fired on the artist. In a long review of the Peredvizhnik exhibition he quoted Kramskoy's praise of the portrait, which he singled out as if it alone was on show:

"I have witnessed the admiration and joy of friends, colleagues and many of our best artists - all are worshippers of Repin... One of the greatest amongst them, Kramskoy, simply sighed in amazement. After the first seconds he grabbed a stool and sat in front of the portrait, in line with the face, and did not leave it for ages. 'What Repin has done here', he said, 'is simply inconceivable. Look there at his portrait of Pisemsky, what a masterpiece! It is somewhat like Rembrandt and Velasquez combined! But this, this portrait, seems even more astounding... how it is drawn, with what skill, what plasticity, how everything is brought out; look at the eyes, how lifelike they are, they see, they are alive with thought, all the emotion of the moment is reflected in them; how few portraits will you see with such expression! And the body! and the cheeks, brow and mouth! - the whole face is alive, and everything is in colour, from first to last detail, everything is in sunlight, without a single shadow - what a work!'"¹²

As with Stasov's publication of Repin's derogatory remarks made in Paris about Raphael, so here Kramskoy was uncomfortable at being widely quoted as comparing Repin with irreproachable masters like Rembrandt and Velasquez, and published an open letter to Stasov claiming his remarks had been misquoted: he merely meant that Musorgsky's portrait was a stylistic hybrid of the two, not that Repin

was comparable to these great artists. Both Repin and Stasov regarded Kramskoy's letter as a tactless overreaction, and Stasov reasserted the veracity of his comments to Tretyakov who, on his high recommendation, bought the work sight unseen.¹³

But Stasov also antagonised Repin since, when the Peredvizhnik exhibition moved to Moscow, his excessive praise of the portrait resulted in its being virtually ignored by the critics there. Repin was angry too that Stasov had totally neglected Surikov's *The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsy* (Ill. 22) and ascribed the continuing animosity towards him amongst Muscovite artists as being exacerbated by Stasov's partisanship.¹⁴

The personal nature of this portrait, possibly the very factor which sets it apart from Repin's other works, is reflected in the artist's attitude towards its sale. On hearing of Musorgsky's death he sent Stasov the fee received from Tretyakov's purchase of the work, 400 roubles, asking that the money be put to establishing a memorial for the composer.¹⁵ Though he is scarcely given credit for this Repin was in fact the first person to actively campaign for a memorial to be erected in Musorgsky's honour.¹⁶

The work is a prime example of the disarming simplicity but forceful directness which Repin employed in so many of his works, placing the sitter against a neutral background without the use of superfluous accessories, relying solely on the one to one confrontation between spectator and subject. His portrait of the writer Pisemsky (1880, Ill. 75), which Kramskoy may or may not have likened to Velazquez and Rembrandt which appeared in the same Peredvizhnik exhibition, is similarly conceived, though executed with more finish, less spontaneity. As with his mature thematic paintings, Repin's portraits of the 1880s are amongst his best works.¹⁷

Though Repin's commissions were frequently highly successful, the *impromptu* nature of Musorgsky's portrait, showing how swiftly and accurately he could grasp the essential characteristics of his sitter, is an asset which permeates many works, setting them aside from more routine canvases and providing insight into the artist's working methods. The so-called 'Dresden' portrait of Stasov (1883, Ill. 76) was worked on over a period of two days during their European tour, when,

due to the Whitsuntide holiday, the closure of museums and galleries imposed a forced idleness on the travellers. According to Stasov, Repin worked for nine hours on the first day "almost without a break", and five hours the following day, completing it in virtually two sittings.¹⁸ Though Repin claimed this was not an unusual occurrence Stasov was disbelieving and considered it a unique and inspired manner of working. He was also pleasantly surprised to find that Repin had purposely kept quiet about the visibility of the nightshirt he wore underneath his coat whilst sitting, fearing he might spoil the intimate and nonchalant pose.¹⁹

The combination of the swift, intense painting, rendered broadly but simply with a limited, muddy tonal range, only Stasov's face, beard and white shirt-front fully illuminated by the strong sunlight from their hotel window, resulted in a pleasingly frank but gentle portrait. The paint is applied thickly, scored in places with the sharp end of the brush, and has a dry looking consistency, indicating the speed and energy with which the artist worked. Apart from the set of the shoulders, a lack of observable alterations or corrections give no hint of the length of sittings and the work has a remarkable freshness which deserts some of the artist's more finished portraits.

Two good examples of the latter are his portraits of Tretyakov (1883, Ill. 77) and of the seated Tolstoy (1887, Ill. 78). Tretyakov's portrait is a reflective, relaxed image, but in placing the collector amongst some of his acquisitions and averting his gaze from the spectator, the sense of simplicity, immediacy and direct contact is lost, and whilst the portrait suggests an inner contemplation the viewer is not made party to this. The work has a dreamy quality which fails to convey a sense of personality and both Repin and Tretyakov were not happy with it.²⁰

The image of the seated Tolstoy, two fingers lodged at separate places in his open book as if interrupted by a sudden thought, is far more successful, treating both the composition and subject matter in a straightforward, unfussy manner. By any standards the likeness is faithfully and expertly executed, and yet the writer's gaze, lost in contemplation, fails to engage the viewer, whom Tolstoy looks through and beyond. This was the first of many portraits and sketches Repin

made of Tolstoy, from the time of their first meeting in 1880, through various periods of residency at Yasnaya Polyana and Tolstoy's Moscow home, the last in 1907.²¹

Repin and Tolstoy. Ideological differences

Tolstoy, like Stasov, was another claimant on Repin's ideological allegiance, though with less persistence and ulterior motive other than a general desire to see his views universally embraced. From his first encounter with the writer, when he and Surikov described him as "the great sun of life",²² Repin was an unwilling disciple, trying hard to reconcile his genuinely devout admiration for Tolstoy's gifts as a writer and philosopher with what seemed obvious inconsistencies and flaws, made incontrovertible only by the force of Tolstoy's intellect. Try as he might, Repin's childhood experiences would not allow him to accept Tolstoy's denial of Western civilisation by expounding the simplicity and honesty of an agrarian peasant existence, though he conceded:

"The influence of this strong gifted person is such that one definitely cannot disagree. Here however, thinking everything through again, many objections come to mind, and now I constantly vacillate. At times it appears I am right, and then later his conclusions turn out even more profound, more lasting."²³

Though drawn to each other on the major common concern of promoting human happiness, the two men were divided by more simple, fundamental differences. Tolstoy's advocacy of the harsh, bleak background from which Repin had extricated himself, and his condemnation of the artificial and superficial 'civilised' life, to which Repin considered himself elevated, was something the artist refused to countenance, and which he viewed with some humour. His memoir of a visit to Yasnaya Polyana in August 1891 gives an amusing description of the sixty-three year old writer, dressed in peasant garb, striding barefoot to the ice cold river, oblivious to his thorny route, to undress and plunge straight in. Behind, the small, dapperly dressed Repin struggled to keep pace, arriving late to carefully undress and gingerly enter the water.²⁴ Later on Repin noted with irony the quizzical look of a peasant family, clearly not locals, watching open mouthed as Tolstoy ploughed under a scorching sun.²⁵ Whilst painting his celebrated

portrait of Tolstoy ploughing Repin observed the powerful, muscular action of the writer at work, but when he tried to plough himself the horses ignored his orders and chaos ensued.²⁶ The irony of their respective attempts, each to pursue a way of life from which the other was escaping, is ironically highlighted in this vision of the aristocratic ploughman and the urbane peasant.

Repin nevertheless had great respect for Tolstoy's sincerity and sense of mission, and his portraits and sketches of the writer often depict him in meaningful but unromanticised poses, reading, writing, mowing, praying, in all gravely going about his business. *Tolstoy Ploughing* (1887, Ill. 79) is a convincing image of the writer engaged in a simple but, for him, meaningful activity, portrayed with a direct and uncomplicated composition. In both composition and subject there is perhaps an allusion here to the *Burlaki*, or possibly to legendary and biblical imagery, all of which could only have added to Tolstoy's approval of the work.²⁷

The painting caused a temporary rift between Tolstoy and Repin after the writer withdrew his permission for the work to be reproduced. It appears that his family, and particularly his long suffering wife, had inveigled him to do so on the grounds that this was a personal and sacred occupation, too easily open to ridicule and misunderstanding. Repin was keen not to offend but was indignant at Countess Tolstoy's suggestion that he had never received permission to publish the painting.²⁸ Eventually Tolstoy overrode his family's objections and apologised to Repin for any distress he had caused.²⁹

Amongst Repin's other portraits of Tolstoy are two more depicting the writer in the open, *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest* (1891, Ill. 80) and *Leo Tolstoy Barefoot* (1901, Ill. 81).³⁰ Though neither give an insight into the writer's psychology, both, far more successfully than the seated portrait of 1887, reflect his unorthodox way of life. *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest* shows the writer, dressed all in white, in a casual pose, stretched out in the shade reading. The aesthetic appeal of the work, the dappled sunlight playing over the reclining figure and the forest undergrowth, as well as the apparently arbitrary, nonchalant pose, has made this one of Repin's most accessible paintings for Western audiences,³¹ and the artist himself clearly took

delight in the rendition of fragmented light playing on shaded surfaces as much as the chance to capture Tolstoy at a random moment.³²

Leo Tolstoy Barefoot is an unusual work in many ways. The tall narrow composition was one which Repin rarely used, though when he did it was most effective. The realistic, plain air feeling of the canvas, as opposed to the impressionistic rendering of *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest*, gives the painting a vividly life-like appearance, whilst the simple but ungainly pose suggests a characteristic stance. Tolstoy was reputedly very unhappy with this portrait, observing of his bare feet: "It's only left for him to paint me without my trousers now."³³

There is a certain amount of humbug in Tolstoy's reaction to his portraits, whether by Repin or the many other artists who propagated his image.³⁴ According to his friend and biographer Aylmer Maude, Tolstoy detested sitting, considering portraiture as one more manifestation of worldly vanity,³⁵ yet he posed often for a whole host of artists, becoming possibly the most portrayed Russian personage of the 19th century. His disapprobation of the barefoot portrait was not shared by the general public though, and when Tolstoy was formally excommunicated Repin's canvas became the focus of a number of student demonstrations at the 29th Peredvizhnik exhibition, being bedecked with flowers amidst speeches of support for the writer. As a consequence it was withdrawn from the St. Petersburg exhibition and permission to display it in Moscow and the provinces was denied.³⁶

Repin's later portraits of Tolstoy were generally poor works. The joint portrait of Tolstoy and his wife for instance, painted in 1907 and reworked in 1910, depicts a befuddled Darby and Joan. Tolstoy found the sittings tiresome and the portrait itself "incredibly funny".³⁷ What he would have made of his posthumous portrait, *Tolstoy Renouncing the Wordly Existence* (Penaty, 1912), is hard to imagine. Painted at the behest of a Muscovite literary circle it depicts Tolstoy surrounded by blossoms, bathed in the glow of a setting sun, a literary apotheosis described by Repin's biographer as "the worst of all his portraits."³⁸

Repin is perhaps not fully to blame for the apparently weak portrayals of the writer executed from his 1907 visit. The seventy

nine year old Tolstoy had only a few years left to live and this doubtlessly contributed to his confused and distant gaze, as much so as Musorgsky's bloated, ruddy face inspired Repin when painting the composer's portrait. An interesting example is the picture *Tolstoy in the Pink Armchair* (1909, Ill.82). On first sight it seems an irresolute image, the sitter's gaze seeming to stray indecisively, giving the writer a vague, slightly ethereal countenance. The work has been described as depicting Tolstoy "in the terrible struggle with death",³⁹ though it presents a rather placid figure. Gorky, who saw Tolstoy during an earlier illness, when it was feared he would not recover, describes the writer in terms closely akin to Repin's portrait:

"The illness dried him up still more, burnt something out of him. Inwardly he seemed to become lighter, more transparent, more resigned... He listens attentively as though recalling something which he has forgotten or as though waiting for something new and unknown. In Yasnaya Polyana he seemed to me a man who had everything and nothing more to learn - a man who had settled every question."⁴⁰

What seems at first glance to be a work lacking in the artist's usual vigour and directness, is more likely to be an accurate record of an ailing elderly man, his intellectual attention wandering beyond both the painter and the viewer, towards introverted, personal concerns.

Whilst considering Repin's portraits of Tolstoy it is worth making some observations on the writer's views about art, since inevitably he, like Stasov, made appeal to the painter's loyalties. At their very first meeting, in 1880, Repin recalled the writer holding forth on both the artificial, elitist nature of most art, and the frivolous waste of a powerful medium which could benefit the human condition by a positive promotion of moral goodness.⁴¹ Tolstoy's meditations on the arts, *What is Art?*, occupied him for fifteen years and was published in 1898. The more outlandish examples of his rectitude, which led him to disown the works of Goethe and Shakespeare, as well as his hilarious parody of Wagner's Ring Cycle, aimed at exposing opera's over elaboration and incomprehensibility to ordinary people, have, naturally, overshadowed any serious substance in the treatist.

What is Art? is an attack both on the German idealist philosophy

which long guided the arts under the notion that art and beauty were synonymous, and, as he had earlier expounded it to Repin, the secular, elitist and artificial art of the wealthy patrons, legitimised by elaborately concocted theories. The idealist concept of art, whether as a reflection of a Platonic eternal and absolute Beauty, or merely as an altruistic, pleasurable experience, he considered useless as definitions of art, since both were subjective. In their place he substituted his own broad definition:

"To call up in oneself a feeling once experienced, and having called it up in oneself by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, images, expressed in words, to so convey this feeling that others experience the same feeling - in this consists the action of art. Art is a human activity consisting of this, that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves."⁴²

This attempt to objectively define art as an activity could comfortably accommodate any school of thought, whether it be a disciple of Chernyshevsky communicating, through the transmission of experience, the inequality of Russian society,⁴³ or Matisse, recreating in the spectator a simple fascination with primary colours and elementary shapes. Tolstoy, however, introduced the same subjectivity which forced him to reject prevalent theories on the notion of beauty and pursued his line of thought with relentless logic, expanding his argument thus: Is the thing communicated something we desire to impart, i.e. is it worthy of transmission, and if not, should we not better use our creative powers in communicating something of worth? Put simply, who but a fool would communicate trivialities rather than truths?

This rationale, driven by his own religious, moral and aesthetic philosophies, led the writer inexorably towards the promotion of a pre-Renaissance artistic simplicity and religious sincerity. The best art is that which enhances life and contributes towards human well-being, expressed by clear, unalloyed, intelligible means, that will reach the largest numbers, rather than by an erudite and artificial tongue, directed through complex symbols and imagery towards an initiated few. The supreme task of the artist then is to convey high-

minded messages in a universally intelligible form: great, good art, is clear, original and sincere.⁴⁴

There is no doubting the sincerity of *What is Art?* and the work today is still a powerfully compelling read, but if one departs from Tolstoy's logical chain of thought at any given link, the thesis becomes implausible. The unswerving rationality of his argument is itself the chief contradiction of the irrationality, emotionality, and the empathy of sentiment which moves so many artists without their necessarily being able to account for it. Tolstoy himself was susceptible to this and is reputed to have been seriously disturbed by music for the very reason that it played unchecked on his emotions, and that he could not logically account for it nor resist it.⁴⁵

The insistence on rational, ethical elucidation in art, though something Repin was sympathetic towards, was not a philosophy to which he could surrender. Part of his artistic nature willfully indulged, even within canvases which fitted these criteria, in the aesthetic delights of line, form and colour, and the inexplicable process of creation remained for him one of art's abiding fascinations. As he had told Tretyakov regarding *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, art is born of:

"...a subtle feeling which cannot be explained by any theory...A picture is a highly complicated and very difficult thing. You can perceive it only through the concentration of all your inner powers into one feeling..."⁴⁶

Though Repin knew in his heart that Tolstoy's theorisings were wrong (for him) he was aware that his intellect could not withstand the writer's matchless cross-examination. He congratulated Tolstoy on the power and clarity of his writing and said that whilst he could not concur with all of its parts, he found much to admire there.⁴⁷ To another correspondent he summed up his dilemma regarding Tolstoy:

"I simply cannot agree with Tolstoy's article - *beauty does exist*. But he himself is terribly interesting! He wants to achieve something completely original in art.... What a lively and powerful genius this man is. But he has a passion for paradoxes."⁴⁸

Tolstoy was more comfortable with disciples than with conscripts; it was important for him to win allegiance rather than contrive it,

and though he looked to Repin to uphold his philosophy on art,⁴⁹ judging the artist's work by these exacting standards, he did not try to bludgeon him into his mode of thought. Where Tolstoy enjoyed nothing more than intellectual cross-fire and respected those who honestly stood their ground, Stasov, as was seen during his tour of Europe with Repin in 1883, could brook no argument which contradicted his own. The artist Leonid Pasternak, who observed both men in debate, commented:

"What a contrast — Lev Nikolaevich and Stasov side by side! The soft, almost tender voice and noble tone, the speech, the whole figure of Lev Nikolaevich, and the coarsely rattled off stereotyped phrases of the 'militant tribune'.⁵⁰

Though Repin was flattered by Tolstoy's attentions and revered him as a man, he was not willing to become merely an adjunct to his philosophies. Indeed, in 1894 he published a long article on the artist Nikolai Ge, a devout disciple of Tolstoy's religious and moral teachings, which, whilst professing great respect for both men, accused the writer of subordinating the artist in Ge to the narrow depiction of religious truths, blaming Ge for his willing collusion in this vitiating process.⁵¹

The need for artistic independence, which inclined Repin to withstand Tolstoy's oppressive persuasion, was more lax in the case of portrait commissions, and though he painted many of the country's leading progressives, he was also, as has been seen, an occasional court painter, as well as a society portraitist. Tretyakov's collection, which included both radical Westernisers and ardent Slavophiles, resulted in commissions of such reactionary characters as I. S. Aksakov, the noted nationalist writer, whose portrait Repin painted without reservation (Tretyakov Gallery, 1878). He later painted M. T. Solovyov, director of the Sytin publishing house (Tretyakov Gallery, 1913), who gave such a damning review of *They Did Not Expect Him*, again, apparently without qualm.⁵²

Repin did, however, draw the line at Tretyakov's plans for a portrait of the notoriously reactionary journalist M. N. Katkov:

"Your intention to commission a portrait of Katkov and place it in your gallery disturbs me, and I cannot refrain from writing that by it you will cast an unpleasant shadow over your fine and

enlightened collecting activity...The portraits which you have amongst your paintings at present, are of a chance character, they do not constitute a systematic collection of Russian figures, but with few exceptions they represent the faces of those dear to the nation, its best sons, who through their selfless activity bring positive benefit, well being and advantage to their homeland, believing in a better future and fighting for this idea...What sense is there to accommodate here a portrait of a retrograde, who so long, with such rigorous consistency and insolent candour attacks every enlightened thought, and holds every free word up to shame...With their Turkish ideals, of sheer slavery, merciless punishment and arbitrary power, these people provoke horrible opposition and such shocking events as, for example, March 1st...Should such people be placed alongside Tolstoy, Nekrasov, Dostoyevsky, Shevchenko, Turgenev and others?! No, for God's sake refrain!!"⁵³

The inclusion of Dostoyevsky amongst this list of Russian worthies is surprising since, less than two months before, on the death of the writer, Repin decried his reactionary beliefs, even linking him with Katkov:

"...I hate his convictions! What ecclesiastical wisdom! He frightens and confines, and without this our depressing lives are already narrow and full of prejudices.

And why this sympathy towards the monasteries (*The Brothers Karamazov*). 'From them will come the salvation of Russia'!!? And why such mud-slinging at the intelligentsia? And his crude hatred of the Poles, the obsolete, home-spun notion of the supposed perniciousness of the West, and his popish glorification of orthodoxy...and much more in this vein, is as obnoxious to me as Katkov himself."⁵⁴

Though Repin painted across social and ideological boundaries he made an exception for Katkov. The commission, naturally, was not undertaken, and Tretyakov was served noticed that the artist's brush was not simply 'for hire'. Conclusions drawn from *whom* Repin portrayed are bound to be distorted by the obvious fact that, except in the case of friends and family, sitters were determined by commissions. The artist, however, retained ultimate control over whether to accept and reject these and, allowing for the delicacy entailed in refusing a Court commission, a straw poll of Repin's portraits shows a broadly 'progressive' pantheon of writers, artists, musicians, actors and actresses, scientists, physicists, doctors, scholars, lawyers and all manner of public figures. Though these could not be coalesced any more

than Tretyakov's acquisitions into a systematic collection, there is a notable absence of reactionary thinkers, Pobedonostsev being a glaring exception.

Aesthetics. Form and style. Informality in family portraits

Consistency of treatment is certainly a mark of Repin's portraiture. His works are frank, unflattering and unidealised, always sincere though often sympathetic, all of which can be observed in his portrait of the story-teller V.P. Shchegolionik (Russian Museum, Ill.83). Generality, as embodied in *The Archdeacon*, or similarly anonymous physiognomies, 'types', was not a recurrent feature of his work,⁵⁵ though individual examples, such as *Tolstoy Ploughing*, *Leo Tolstoy Barefoot*, and certainly *Tolstoy Renouncing the Worldly Existence*, all have varying degrees of symbolic content. Similarly, posthumous portraits of Glinka (1887) and Liszt (1887), approvingly dubbed "resurrections" by Stasov,⁵⁶ are interesting but anomalistic examples of Repin's work in this genre. Without wishing to minimise Repin's undoubted intellectual force and psychological incisiveness, amply manifested in the portrait of Musorgsky, his works, with very few exceptions, are consistently concrete. As the poet Fet is reported to have told Tolstoy:

"If a portrait is a good one, then it will have a mouth; and if you open the mouth you would find a tongue; and under the tongue, there would be bone, and so on."⁵⁷

The artist Leonid Pasternak, who reported this remark, and who was himself an assured but unconventional portraitist, did not regard this insistence on tangibility as an obstacle to artistic creation, commenting: "Fet's incisive graphic expression is relevant to the very essence of each work of art: everything evolves naturally, one thing flows from another with the inevitability of life itself."⁵⁸

The aesthetic qualities of Repin's portraits, especially in terms of composition and the seemingly effortless evocation of informality, are also consistencies which punctuate his output. His works are rarely cluttered or supported by reference to extraneous symbols. The aforementioned portrait of Glinka, seen working on his opera *Ruslan*

and Lyudmilla, lying ill and semi-recumbent on a divan, a sheet of music in one hand and a pencil in the other, is a rare exception. Though with less elucidation, it is undoubtedly modelled on Kramskoy's portrait *Nekrasov at the Time of His Last Poems* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1877-1878), showing the writer in a similar pose, surrounded by symbols such as a bust of Belinsky and a print of Dobrolyubov, which amplify the narrative in the same manner as the domestic accessories in *They Did Not Expect Him*.⁵⁹

A similarly fussy treatment is accorded *Meeting Pirogov in Moscow at the Station, 22 May 1881*. (Museum of Field Medicine, Leningrad, 1883-1888). Commissioned to celebrate the 50 year jubilee of the celebrated surgeon, it depicts a small, indistinct Pirogov, swamped by the reception committee as he alights from the train.⁶⁰

But these are not typical of Repin's portraits, the poses of which are more usually harmonious, straightforward, or, when the model suggested, strikingly unusual. Good examples of the former include the portrait of Mitrofan Belyaev (Ill. 84, 1886), the millionaire timber merchant who turned his fortune to publishing and promoting Russian music,⁶¹ and at whose cultural gatherings, the 'musical Fridays', Repin was a frequent visitor. Pictured against a plain background with an intelligent, meditative gaze, one hand resting leisurely in his pocket, the other raised to touch his beard in a thoughtful, obviously characteristic gesture, Belyaev presents a simply conceived but imposing presence, exuding a Renaissance 'sprezzatura', the exterior reflection of inner grace and ease, a form of studied nonchalance.

Similarly successful is the portrait of the lawyer V.D. Spasovich (Ill. 85, 1882). Set once more against a neutral background, the large dark mass of his frame is enlivened only by his white shirt-front and a gold watch-chain and decoration, his lively, quick-witted expression and unusual gesture of the hand, pulling the viewer into the canvas in a beguiling manner. A list of these elegant, incisive portrayals would be a long one: the portrait of the cellist A.V. Verzhbilovich (Russian Museum, 1895), a virtuoso tonal work composed almost entirely of greys and black, punctuated only by a few gold highlights, is but one more fine example, as is the portrait of the lawyer V.S. Gerard (Russian Museum, 1893), a composed, confident figure set against a deep red

background, the face and hair illuminated from above, but the remainder of the work composed of rich, dark tones, an excellent example of painting black on black.⁶²

More striking, idiosyncratic uses of pose can be seen in several works. The frail, almost translucent figure of Countess Louise Mercy d'Argenteau (Ill.86, 1890), the Belgian pianist who did much to popularise Russian music in the West, was painted by Repin only eleven days before her death in a graceful, recumbent position, a touchingly intimate and unconventional complement to the more earthy portrait of Musorgsky. The portrait of Pelageya Strepetova in the role of Lizaveta from Pisemsky's play *Hard Lot*, (Ill.87, 1882), makes use of a sharply defined chiaroscuro on the actress's face and an ungainly, slouched pose similar to Rembrandt's *The Descent from the Cross* (Munich, Alte Pinakothek, 1633), heightening both the tragedy of the exhausted character and the reserved but powerful talent of Strepetova.⁶³

Though the bulk of Repin's portraits are of men, those of women, both society figures and family members, are frequently amongst his very best, both in their sense of intimacy and for their aesthetic and decorative qualities. The success of these works is surprising given the personal turmoil against which many were conceived. Soviet writings on Repin show predictable reserve concerning the artist's private and personal life, but his fascination with women, whose company he cultivated, led to a number of indiscreet liaisons, chiefly with servants and models, and intermittent infatuations, notably with pupils and sitters, including Tatyana Tolstoy, to whom he gave art lessons and corresponded with in frank, intimate terms.⁶⁴ A spectacularly demeaning and unrequited passion was conceived for Yelizaveta Zvantseva, a student who later studied in Paris, 1895, before establishing her own school in Moscow in 1899, hiring Serov and Konstantin Korovin as teachers. She later transferred to St. Petersburg, overseeing a bevy of talented students, including Leon Bakst, Konstantin Somov and Mstislav Dobuzhinsky.⁶⁵

Repin's behaviour was a sore trial to his wife, exacerbated by the artist's growing conviction that they were intellectually unsuited. Though Vera had had a formal education, which was more than Repin could boast of, his elevation to intellectual circles, and her

reluctance to follow, preferring to devote her attentions to their family of four children, meant that Repin's capabilities soon outstripped her own. A brief but terse complaint to Tretyakov that family squabbles were hindering his work⁶⁶ preceded a separation in early 1884, and whilst the couple were briefly reunited for a few years after 1891, the relationship was at an end.

Though democratic by nature, Repin was an autocrat at the breakfast table, presiding over an eccentric and often petty domestic regime, his unconventional lifestyle including a fetish for sleeping with open windows even in sub-zero temperatures, or for sleeping *alfresco* on the balcony.⁶⁷

As a consequence he never formed close ties with any of his children. Vera (1872-1948), the eldest, remained his favourite, a strong-willed and ambitious woman, but apparently lacking in any form of ability. Nadya, (1874-1931), was a sickly girl and a poor student, later diagnosed schizophrenic.⁶⁸ Tatyana, the youngest (1880-?), settled on Repin's estate at Zdravnevo and on his death went to live abroad. Yury, his son, (1877-1954), became a painter of modest intellect, though of reputedly great technical skill. He lived very much in his father's shadow and was often the brunt of his disapproval. A confirmed mystic and all-round eccentric with delusions of his Christ-like bearing, he eventually committed suicide by leaping from the seventh floor of a building in Helsinki.⁶⁹

Apart from Repin's sexual indiscretions, which were unexceptional for the times, his overriding devotion to work, much like Tolstoy, left little room for domestic harmony. A tell-tale insight is provided by Repin's reconciliatory letter to Stasov in 1899:

"I love art more than virtue, more than people, more than family, more than friends, more than any kind of happiness or joy in life. I love it secretly, jealously, like an old drunkard - incurably."⁷⁰

And yet despite the turbulent undercurrents, on the surface Repin's portraits of family and female sitters remained serenely unruffled. The portrait of his wife, *Vera Repin Resting* (Ill. 88, 1882) painted at a time when their relationship was already under considerable strain, is a model of peaceful intimacy, gentle repose and classical beauty.

The foreshortened composition and lush red tones, both of the plush velvet chair and Vera's floral dress, are again examples of a purposefully difficult composition and problematic rendition of colours possessing almost identical tonal qualities.⁷¹

Portraits of Repin's immediate family, painted with no patron or public in mind, are undoubtedly amongst his very best. A similarly gentle, ingenuous rendition is given to the portrait of his five year old son, Yury (Ill. 89, 1882), swaddled amongst the rich tones of a large Turkish carpet. The pale, delicate child with his large black eyes and dark uniform, set against the highly ornate background, is a touchingly fragile figure, whilst the lack of visual reference points gives the painting a flat, two-dimensional quality, emphasising its decorative aspect.⁷² The portrait is a fine example of aesthetic considerations being pursued in tandem with an accurate, life-like rendition of the sitter, neither facet of the work unbalancing the other, but harmonising perfectly. All of these traits can be seen in Repin's portrait of his sickly daughter Nadya, painted the year before (Ill. 90, 1881), though here the pose is even more artless and the colouration of her cream and pink dress less vibrant, more subtle, though no less pleasing from a painterly standpoint. Again the lack of any spatial recession, here coupled with a closely cropped composition, the girl's hands and legs disappearing suddenly out of the picture space, helps focus on the purely decorative aspect of the girl's dress, as well as enhancing the feeling of candid intimacy. The child's head is a particularly fine and sympathetic piece of painting, conceived in an obliquely foreshortened pose which displaces the facial features, severely complicating a successful rendition, yet this is well resolved, seemingly with ease.

A sense of gentle, intimate, harmonious family life pervades Repin's portraits of his wife and children, and whilst this might not be an accurate reflection of the Repin household, they bespeak a depth of genuine, unforced emotional warmth which, clearly, the artist felt more able to express through the reflective process of his work. But apart from these characteristics he also utilised the less grand, more informal nature of his family portraits, to explore and experiment with technical and formal considerations. This is most marked in his

works of the 1890s, when, for reasons which will be expounded upon in the following chapter, he was advocating aestheticism in art with great gusto. This process has already been observed in his portrait of *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest*, though the painterly freedom of personal portraits had always allowed the artist to work with greater attention to the aesthetic side of his talent, as for instance with *On a Turf Seat* (Ill.20), *Girl With a Bunch of Flowers. Vera Repin*, (Ill.21), and *On a Park Bridge* (Ill.41). *A Lively Girl. Vera Repin* (Ill.91, 1884) is another example of predominantly aesthetic painting which predates the art for art's sake 1890s, suggesting that caution should be exercised in too narrowly defining that decade, at least from the point of view of the artist's work. The bright, sunny figure of Repin's daughter, commendably unidealised with her asiatic, almond-shaped eyes and large nose, is suspended across the canvas against a flat blue background of sky, wisps of grass below providing the only indication of her surroundings. Conceived at the same time Repin was finishing *They Did Not Expect Him*, the sense of light and crisp, clean air is an element common to both works, though unlike the latter it is here the chief concern and main subject of the painting, falling and reflecting on the girl's ruffled dress, and permeating her straw hat to cast a soft glow on her face.

A preoccupation with *plein air* tonality and colourful, painterly execution, can also be seen in the later portrait of Vera, *Autumn Bouquet* (Ill.92, 1892). Though this is often cited as a prime example of the professed aestheticism of the 1890s reflected in paint,⁷³ the tone of the work is actually more subdued, executed with a higher degree of finish and attention to fine detail, and is less convincing as a piece of free painterly exuberance than the bright, airy composition of the young Vera in 1884. It is nevertheless a particularly graceful and casual portrait, once more untainted by any concession to idealisation, the mature Vera showing the same facial characteristics which mark her childhood portraits.

The painterly concerns of Repin's portraits are perhaps most spectacularly to the fore in that of his daughter Nadya, *In the Sunlight*, (Ill.93, 1900), a work which radiates both pure and reflected light, juxtaposed with the spiky, starkly graphic background

of the woman's dark parasol. Like *Autumn Bouquet* this work was painted in the peaceful retreat of Repin's estate in Zdravnevo, far from the pressures of the capital and his role of eminent national artist. The work is executed with great verve and panache, the brushstrokes racing around the canvas, whilst the landscape in the background is roughed-in in an almost abstract manner, and yet the tonal qualities of the play of light on the woman's clothing harmonise in a manner which gives the work a solid, concrete appearance, achieved totally by paint, without the use of drawing to accentuate detail, as in *Autumn Bouquet*. This is particularly obvious on close inspection of the sitter's face which, in reproduction, appears to be a well defined portrait, but whilst the likeness is presumably a good one the face is in fact painted in a very sketchy manner, the artist's attention being preoccupied with a rendition of the soft light which illuminates the face through the thin film of his daughter's wide-brimmed hat.

Society portraits and graphic experimentation

Repin's society portraits, of which Louise Mercy D'Argenteau is a fine but unconventional example, generally utilise an aesthetic of bold, stylish, or decorative designs, usually in a more studied, less informal manner than those of his family, though few are 'formal' in a stilted or stuffy manner. The best of these works again belong roughly to the 1890s. The portrait of Sofya Dragomirova (Ill. 94, 1889), the eighteen year old daughter of the famous general, painted in a rich green Ukrainian costume, uses a relaxed but studied pose of meditation, whilst retaining a broad, colourful, painterly execution. The background as ever is kept purposely blank, providing no distraction from either the decorative costumery or the serious, soulful expression of the sitter.⁷⁴

Of a particularly high standard is Repin's portrait of Countess Natalya Golovina (Ill. 95, 1896), an elegantly poised work showing the society beauty's refined and confident profile. Though Repin makes no attempt to capture her psychological state, the freedom with which the work is executed, with swift, impasted but sure brushwork, and the harmonies of pink, cream and rich cherry-coloured tones, enlivened by the Countess's shimmering jewelry, show Repin at the height of his

artistic powers, totally and confidently in command.

That same sureness of touch and elegance of execution pervades the aloof but magnificent figure of Varvara Ikskul von Hildenbandt (Ill. 96, 1889), a collector and founder of numerous philanthropic societies whose celebrated literary, artistic and musical *salons* Repin frequented throughout the 1890s. A woman of progressive ideas, a beautiful and successful society hostess, and the subject of much malicious gossip,⁷⁶ Repin makes commanding use once more of a rarely employed tall, narrow composition. The sitter's face, bisected from ear to ear by a dark veil, is slightly disconcerting, but the graceful ease and confidence of the pose, the clash of jet black and dazzling red forms, coupled with the splashes of gold and silver of the Baroness's heavy bracelets, present a slim, elegant, nonchalant study of Russian *chic* in the late 1880s, and of a confident woman, assured of her cultural and social status.

The technical freedom and maturity which marks Repin's best portraits in oils was innovatively transferred to the medium of graphic art during the 1890s, though not in the usual form of preparatory sketches for finished works. His involvement with purely aesthetic concerns during this decade resulted in an enhanced interest for this traditionally inferior artistic vehicle, in which capacity he both exhibited and organised displays of works, the most notable being the *Exhibition of Experiments*, a bold undertaking which exhibited student work alongside studies by both Russian and Western masters and which, due to its artistic unorthodoxy, was denied space at the Academy, being housed instead at the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts.⁷⁷ The fate of this venture and Repin's concern for the artistic autonomy of the sketch is considered further in the next chapter, but the influence of his volatile musings and searches for new artistic avenues during this decade is dramatically reflected in his graphic portraits.

In 1892 Repin contributed to the *Second Exhibition of Drawings (Blanc et Noir)*,⁷⁸ also at the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, a life-size charcoal portrait, on canvas, of the Italian actress Eleonora Duse (Ill. 97, 1891). Whether Repin intended to work this into an oil portrait later is not known, but to exhibit it as a work in its

own right was a novel and progressive artistic practise which ran contrary to the Peredvizhnik ethos. That same year an edict issued by the Society to clarify the criteria on which works for the annual exhibitions would be selected affirmed the disbarment of works done purely for the sake of painting, the desirability of a narrative or emotional input, and the inclusion of still lifes and figure studies only if rendered with exceptional virtuosity.⁷⁹

If one compares Repin's graphic work of the 1890s with that of previous decades there is a marked technical and aesthetic difference. Those executed during the 1870s-1880s are grounded in the same tightly structured technical excellence engendered by the Academy, the fine details held in place by meticulous use of outlining.⁸⁰ By comparison the languid, sphinx-like drawing of Eleonora Duse makes a virtue of its incomplete state, emphasising rather than disguising the artist's passionate, exuberant technique. The style of the work is totally dissimilar to Repin's usual illustrative output, being far freer (he was of course not tied to the constraints and limitations of drawing for any of the reproductive processes), constituting in effect a form of monochromatic painting, constructed via a similar use of light, shade and tonal contrasts as utilised in his oil works.⁸¹ A series of graphics produced through the decade, including a celebrated portrait of Serov (Tretyakov Gallery, 1901) and the beautifully refined portrait of Sofya Stakhovich (Ill. 98, 1891), exhibit the same dramatic tendencies. Stakhovich's portrait shows more superficial finish than that of the Italian actress, but the passionate execution and insistence on leaving bare the technical process by which this is achieved is common to these large scale painterly graphics.⁸²

Stylistic influences

Repin's artistic output was often likened to that of the great masters, partly by design, since the nascent school of Russian painting needed to legitimise itself by comparison with worthy precedents. This was not, however, without good cause, and by the end of the 1880s Benois recorded that it was not unusual to liken Repin's talent to that of Rembrandt and Velazquez.⁸³ Stasov consistently

grouped Repin in company with the Western masters, likening *The Archdeacon* to Rembrandt, quoting Kramskoy that Pisemsky was a combination of Velazquez and Rembrandt, and listing Rembrandt, Raphael, Rubens, Tintoretto and Veronese as precursors of the profound psychological insight and technical mastery which distinguished *State Council*.⁸⁴

Such comparisons were not fortuitious. Repin's letters are peppered with admiring references to the great names of 16th and 17th century art, and in particular Rembrandt and Velazquez, both of whom were used in defence of the lack of idealism in *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*.⁸⁵ These two artists in particular were yardsticks of intellectual and technical excellence for Repin whom he compared favourably to the "illiterate" style of Fra Angelico, emphasising a commitment to a naturalistic rather than a stylised manner of viewing the world.⁸⁶ Early admiration for both painters can be seen during his sojourn in Paris where, despite misgivings about contemporary art, he found stability and solace in the established genius of these artistic exemplars.⁸⁷

Though not necessarily with any planned programme in mind Repin also followed Rembrandt's practise of painting many self portraits, providing a frank and personal record of his evolving physical and mental state.⁸⁸

During their tour of Europe in 1883, when Repin renewed his love of the western masters at firsthand, delighting in copying many works in the galleries they visited, Stasov felt his uncritical admiration for Velazquez overstepped the bounds of decency since, though Stasov acknowledged his artistic genius, at heart he considered the Spaniard a Court employee. Repin had no such qualms and in a letter to Tretyakov of the same year lauded Velazquez's pre-eminence in terms of his profound understanding, originality, technical talent and simplicity of rendition, eschewing a highly detailed finish which would have destroyed the overall harmony of his works.⁸⁹

Repin was attracted to many western masters and whilst in Holland, for instance, greatly admired the work of Frans Hals,⁹⁰ but both in his own writing and that of his contemporaries Rembrandt and Velazquez continually reoccur in connection with his work. In Velazquez he found

important qualities which were applied in particular to portraiture: a lack of idealisation, dignity of subject matter, and an approach which acknowledged the importance of all of the picture's components, hence the elimination of unnecessary accessories. In the same manner that Velazquez humanised the stiff, formal nature of court portraiture, instilling natural poses and individuality into his sitters, so Repin revitalised the increasingly deadening effects of too much photographic correctness in many realist portraits.

From Rembrandt he adopted an effective use of chiaroscuro, used in a natural, direct and intimate manner, again without flattery, and a predilection for thoughtful, introspective renditions. The vigorous brushwork of the Dutch master, heavily impasted with occasional use of ebullient baroque decoration, notably in *State Council*, were all technical facets which Repin warmed to.

But this was not a slavish admiration, and his insistence on artistic integrity ensured that assimilation to another artist's style was never a danger.

"New forms are necessary to a living temperament gripped by reality and though what artist does not admire Titian...another Titian, Rembrandt or Raphael is impossible. The world does not need another. The more an artist wants to work like another, the greater the danger is for him: it will always become nothing short of copying. This is the 'living corpse' in art and why the Academy, the conservatory of the greatest principles of art, always and everywhere produces only still-born homunculi."⁹¹

In searching for his own voice Repin mingled the vestiges of traditionalism with traces of academicism, (visual fidelity and technical excellence) as well as the realistic high relief, laconicism and power of the best Peredvizhnik works. *The Archdeacon* and *Spurning Confession* are clearly closely akin to the work of Rembrandt, whilst the studied refinement of Belyaev's portrait has echoes of Titian's nonchalant virtuosity, but the sharply focused painterly precision of Spasovich or Baroness Ikskul von Hildenbandt are quintessentially realist.⁹²

Amongst the moderns Repin's portraits bear similarities with the robust and painterly works of Carolus Duran, though during his tour of Europe in 1883 Repin noted with dismay that the artist had "gone to

the bad".⁹³ In his most elegant of society portraits, painted in thickly sparkling tones which advertise rather than conceal the brushwork, Repin has the same sharp tonal contrasts, dexterity and ease which characterises the work of Sargent (a pupil of Carolus Duran's and a technical adherent of Velazquez and Manet), though without descending into the superficial slickness for which the American painter was so often berated.

Stylistic comparisons are, however, at best incidental since, like Manet, Repin evolved a personal style which, whilst owing allegiance to that of established masters, was unmistakably his own, and in the genre of portraiture, where physical correctness and psychological insight could be pursued in tandem with a freer application of painterly and aesthetic concerns, he produced many of his very best works. The scale, drama and serious content of his major canvases can initially tend to overshadow his portraits, especially so in the West, where even a sitter of Stasov's eminence is relatively unknown, but this strong body of works, which continues to throw up revelations,⁹⁴ waits patiently to be discovered and is likely to continue to reward investigation and provide artistic insight long after the emotional stimulation of the large scale paintings has been tempered by familiarity.

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CHAPTER 7

Reactions to Artistic Innovations. The 1890s and Beyond

Resignation from the Peredvizhniki: contacts with young artists and a change of aesthetics

Repin's change of artistic direction which has been referred to in previous chapters was the result of several factors, some personal, others external. His artistic development, and especially his contacts with younger artists, provoked if not an outright crisis, then at least a state of artistic uncertainty from the late 1880s onwards, as he came increasingly to doubt his faith in the principles which had hitherto guided his highly successful endeavours. His association with students at the watercolour sessions organised from 1882 onwards, in particular with Serov, provided him with a source of creative rejuvenation and, in the light of the unexpectedly negative reactions to his realistic and narrative approach on the part of Vrubel and others,¹ forced a reassessment of his position.

That he did so is in itself commendable, since, faced with similar challenges from the younger generation of artists, the Peredvizhniki decided to batten down the hatches and weather the storm in the hope that it would soon blow itself out. This was not to be, and the 1890s, the era of pluralism in the arts, left the traditional realists becalmed, to be characterised thereafter as epigones, until the Stalinist historiography reinstated the marooned social commentators to a position of prominence.

The chief bone of contention was the reluctance on the part of the original Peredvizhniki, in particular hard-liners like Myasoyedov, Pryanishnikov and Yaroshenko, to admit new members, or to countenance all but the most conventional forms of realism. Young artists, like Vrubel, Korovin and Serov, came from more affluent backgrounds and were better educated than the generation of the 1860s, and accordingly were less concerned with effecting social changes (many of which had already come to pass), and were instead more interested in formal concerns, or at least the necessity for artistic freedom of subject and style. Only after many years, and with the personal assistance of

Repin, a prominent member of the Peredvizhniki, was Serov eventually admitted as a member of the Society, but Korovin exhibited for nearly a decade without being enrolled and Vrubel's unorthodox talent was consistently halted at the jury stage.²

With almost frightening predictability the Peredvizhniki, themselves formed out of a desire for artistic freedom, ossified into a second Academy, an artistic closed shop imposing limitations and conditions on art and becoming bogged down in endless administration and clerical protocol. The more astute members were aware of this and as early as 1886 Kramskoy talked of resigning since, in his view, the Society had run its course, becoming *de facto* a second Academy.³

In the same way that the original secessionists were forced to think long and hard before leaving the Academy, so young artists in the late 1880s-early 1890s were reluctant to go it alone and tried hard to infiltrate the Society, despite continual rebuttals. The age of burgeoning exhibition space and entrepreneurial showings was a while down the road yet and the Peredvizhniki still formed the most important shop window for new talent.⁴

Matters came to a head in March 1890 when a group of young Muscovite painters, led by Sergei Ivanov, requested that the Society increase its jury to take account of non-members who had nevertheless been regular contributors.⁵ According to Polenov, who with Repin and Ge formed the core of artists sympathetic to the aims of the young painters, the entrenched members of the Society were literally in fear of the up and coming generation of talent,⁶ an assertion confirmed by their reactionary reply, which was to re-frame the Society's statutes, reverting its administration to the founder members of 1870.⁷

By this move even Repin and Polenov were disbarred from the board and though Polenov decided to fight from the inside, Repin, in company with Viktor Vasnetsov, resigned from the Society.⁸ Though this did not in fact take place until the following year, 1891, Repin's dissatisfaction with the Peredvizhniki was long standing. In 1887 he complained to Savitsky of "a bureau of state functionaries", no better than the Academy from which he had escaped,⁹ and less than three weeks later he resigned in a politely worded letter expressing hopes for the Society's continued success, but citing persistent differences of

opinion and "unpleasant disturbances" with fellow members, as his reason for quitting.¹⁰ In this instance he returned to the Peredvizhniki the following year, but his second, more lasting resignation, in 1891, came hard on the heels of previous disgruntlements.¹¹

As Peredvizhnik members embarked on an internecine feud so Count Ivan Tolstoy, Alexander III's newly appointed Academy President, had already set about the process of wooing the Society's big guns to participate in a reformed and revitalised national school of art.¹² Repin, who was becoming increasingly concerned about the need to improve the standard of artistic instruction, was elected to the Government Commission considering the means and methods of reform in April 1890, the proposals of which were published the following year.¹³ But whilst the concurrence of a hardening Peredvizhnik bureaucracy, and Alexander's plans for a re-think of artistic policy, played a large part in convincing Repin that the future lay with the Imperial institution, contacts with younger, more aesthetically conscious artists occasioned a growing sense of artistic doubt, which in great measure led to the discord precipitating his resignation in 1887. And these did not abate.

Soon after rejoining the Society, Repin attempted to persuade Serov to exhibit his *Girl in Sunlight* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1888), at the 18th Peredvizhnik exhibition, a fresh, sun-filled, virtuoso piece of painterly freedom. Repin persuade Tretyakov to acquire the work but its inclusion in the latter's gallery prompted Vladimir Makovsky to enquire: "Since when, Pavel Mikhailovich, did you begin to infect your gallery with syphilis?"¹⁴ Makovsky's comment eloquently sums up the level of aesthetic debate in which the Society's traditionalists engaged, an outlook summed up by Leonid Pasternak, who first exhibited with the Peredvizhniki the same year:

"I was amazed...how weak in drawing were even distinguished artists (excluding of course masters of form and drawing like Repin, Polenov, Serov and V. Vasnetsov). Neither form nor draughtsmanship, but only subject, i.e. 'a story about something', was then the chief concern of Peredvizhnik works...Our generation strove for, and eventually achieved, the freedom to work and exhibit using any techniques, and not just oil, as the Peredvizhniki demanded. I remember that watercolours

were then not accepted for Peredvizhnik exhibitions at all."¹⁵

Elsewhere Pasternak singled out Repin, Polenov and both of the Vasnetsov brothers as "progressive Peredvizhniks",¹⁶ as opposed to their less broad-minded brethren — artists indifferent to the enthusiasm of the younger generation for technical experimentation. For Repin this liberal attitude towards his craft went beyond just formal concerns to embrace the wider aspect of art tuition in general. In contrast to the inflated importance of the Peredvizhnik hierarchy he welcomed the views of younger artists and showed himself willing, now that the initial shock of Vrubel's disregard for his conventional realist works had subsided, to accept candid criticisms from painters half his age. Repin's friend, and later editor of his memoirs, Kornei Chukovsky, recalled how Repin "nearly kissed" Pasternak when the young man made some direct, critical remarks about Repin's work, instead of the usual "outbursts of enthusiasm" the painter was accustomed to.¹⁷

In return, young and innovative painters such as Vrubel, Serov and Korovin, acknowledged Repin's enlightened and informal method of teaching by example, rather than formulae.¹⁸ Even Benois, who, when Repin reneged on his art for art's sake stance, vilified the artist as a man who wasted his talents on "...tracks which lie far from the true aims of art," paid homage to his influence in later life. "It was Repin's pictures which awakened in me a more serious interest in modern art, Russian as well as foreign."¹⁹

The influence of these younger painters and of Repin's changing aesthetics, is clearly visible in some of his works at this time, and yet noticeably absent from others, as if the artist was working in two modes. Some of these will be discussed in due course whilst others, particularly his aesthetically based portraits of the late 1880s and 1890s, and his painterly, life-sized graphic works, have already been touched upon. The lesser regarded medium of the graphic arts, to which the new generation of artists were more disposed on account of its spontaneity and artistic integrity, increasingly occupied Repin's thoughts and the 1890s saw his involvement in a number of ventures which were both progressive and innovatory, yet only partially successful.

In 1891 following his resignation from the Peredvizhniki, Repin established his huge one man show in Moscow (an exhibition by Shishkin was held on the same premises), which moved to St. Petersburg early the following year. It was here that *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was first exhibited and it was no coincidence that he chose also to show thirty sketches related to the work since, with few exceptions, the majority of exhibits were studies and variants. This gesture towards the independence of the sketch, and in relation to *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* a chance to observe the painting's evolution, was unconventional and accordingly received a mixed reception. Igor Grabar, then a young artist, visited the exhibition on frequent occasions enraptured by the depth of artistic insight he gained from this window onto the artist's mind.²⁰ Other reactions, as have been seen, were ambivalent, considering the exhibition a mixture of good, bad and indifferent items, and *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* a fine but over extended work, making too much of a minor incident.²¹ More predictable were criticisms on the incomplete and unedifying nature of the sketch *per se*,²² the importance of which formed a litmus test for dividing the experimentors from the traditionalists.

The debate over the worth of the sketch, spontaneous versus calculated art, was by no means new, but the proliferation of artistic societies, journals and exhibiting venues during this decade dragged the issue into prominence and Repin was happy to engage in the debate. The maturing freedom with which his portraits of the period were painted, and the exhibition of life-sized graphic portraits on canvas all show a growing willingness to emphasise the technical means by which the work of art was wrought, as opposed to the conventional notion of the sketch, or the study, as a preliminary, to be skilfully obscured in the finished work: a question of patching up the seams rather than making a virtue of them.

Repin contributed to a number of experimental exhibitions during this decade: the *Second Exhibition of Studies by Russian Artists* in Moscow, 1890; his one-man show of 1891, entitled *Paintings, Portraits, Sketches and Studies*; *The Blanc et Noir* exhibitions of 1892 and 1903 in St. Petersburg; *The Exhibition of Experiments* in 1896/97, and *Drawings and Watercolours from the Collection of Princess Tenisheva* in

1897, both in St. Petersburg; and in 1903, a decade or more behind the innovators, *The First Peredvizhnik Exhibition of Drawings, Sketches and Studies*.²³ At the same time, as if shrugging off the insularity of the Russian arts, Repin exhibited in Berlin in 1891 and 1896, Chicago in 1893, Munich, Stockholm and Venice in 1897, and Paris and Prague in 1900: eight foreign exhibits within a decade where previously he had shown abroad only five times in twenty six years.²⁴

The Exhibition of Experiments and Sketches, mentioned briefly in the preceding chapter, was without doubt his major contribution to artistic experimentation during this decade of changeable outlooks. Its purpose was two-fold, both to provide an exhibition space for young artists recently excluded from the All Russian Exhibition at Nizhni Novgorod by a hostile jury of Academics and die-hard Peredvizhniks, and, simply, to open new artistic avenues. Its scope was to be both innovatory and free:

"Exhibited will be sketches, mainly, that is to say, things in which artistic work appears: in thought, expression, colour, tone, lighting, etc, - oils, watercolour, pencil, sepia - everything which shows talent will be exhibited. Excluded are: portraits, studies, completely finished works from life, and everything without talent."²⁵

The assistance of other 'progressive' Peredvizhniks, Polenov and Viktor Vasnetsov, was enlisted, but Repin went out of his way to court the Moscow based group of young artists around Yelena Polenova, eagerly enquiring after how his idea met with their favour.²⁶

The exhibition ran from 22 December 1896 to mid-January 1897 at the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts in St. Petersburg, and though Repin's initial plan to exhibit Russian and Western works, by both established masters and students, was whittled down to just two foreign painters, Francisco Pradilla and Tiepolo, 170 works were shown by twenty artists. Reviews were mixed and sales poor, but as an experiment in patronage (Repin financed the venture personally), and an attempt to dispense with formality and regulations, as well as providing a platform for the exhibition of technical experiments, the show was a portent of the strivings for artistic freedom and release from technical inhibitions which was to mark the late 1890s and beyond when, ironically, Repin found it necessary to preach against too much

freedom as the cause of indiscipline.²⁷

Repin's alliance with the young artists and his encouragement of technical experimentation was far from one sided. Whilst he earnestly desired to instill a sense of emancipation into the pedagogic process, he clearly reaped a personal benefit from his association with fresh and receptive minds. At the beginning of the decade, having reached a creative hiatus in an immensely successful career, he encountered the artistic doldrums, and almost like Tolstoy's religious and ethical musings on the pointlessness of life, lapsed into artistic fatalism, perceiving no valid justification for his chosen profession. In a sense, like Tolstoy, he found solace in the ethic of service to others, in this instance an enhanced concern for the structure and methods of art education, the means by which the next generation of artists could best be nurtured. At the same time an adherence to formal and aesthetic concerns in art allowed him to contemplate art as a means unto itself, rather than a means to an end, a tool of political agitation or social rejuvenation which would stand or fall by its utilitarian success.

"To oblige an artist to be, without fail, a philosopher or a moralist is an unattainable demand. Life is everywhere scattered into its individual pieces. And we profane art, it's forms, light and colours, when we turn aside from it, or if it is superfluously moralising or philosophising."²⁸

Repin's change of attitude towards the main aims and goals of art produced some incongruous endorsements, such as his admiration for the strange symbolism of the Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin,²⁹ and led him also to criticise what he regarded as Ge's ideological enslavement to religious themes, as seen through the eyes of his mentor, Tolstoy.³⁰ But it was his desertion of the Peredvizhniki and embracement of the new Academy, compounded by a series of pro-aesthetic articles, the *Letters on Art*, which completed the schism with the utilitarian ethos of the 1860s and with Stasov, who regarded Repin's actions and pronouncements as nothing short of a betrayal.

Repin and the Reformed Academy

Having contributed to the planning stage of the reformed Academy, Repin accepted a professorship at the august institution in May 1892,

although he did not take up his duties until September of 1894, in company with Kuindzhi, Vladimir Makovsky, Myasoyedov, Shishkin and Nikolai Kuznetsov.³¹ Polenov, who, as a member of the Commission, had advocated an end to the Court domination, was excluded from nomination and remained at the Moscow School.³² Yaroshenko declined, as did Surikov, who was averse to the life of an art official, despite strenuous pleading by Repin for him to join.³³

The Academy was still not an autonomous institution, a Grand Duke remained as President and the teaching staff were appointed, rather than elected by their peers, but the teaching methods were transformed, being switched to studio instruction in place of classroom theorising. Students became free to select their own themes, to submit work for continuous assessment, as and when they saw fit, and to choose which classes and under which professors they wished to study. The civil service rankings which so readily identified artists as state servitors were now dropped in favour of a simple diploma.³⁴

In response to Stasov, who characterised his transference of allegiance as a "betrayal of republicanism and democracy in art",³⁵ Repin explained his position as an obligation:

"To me it is simply ridiculous, to seriously consider that you know me so little as to suggest that I am going to the Academy for official position and rank!! And that you are capable to suppose I am such an idiot!!!...

I now consider it my duty to enter the Academy, both with regard to the younger generation and to Russian art...Where else are the young artists who are springing up like mushrooms all over Russia supposed to study?...

The Tovarishchestvo long ago formed itself into a *Sanhedrin* (a council) of founders; the equality of members was destroyed long since - *which is precisely why I left the Society*. It constantly pressurises the young and, significantly, is already divorced from new opinions and tastes. It does not even hide its authoritarian tone towards the young members and exhibitors and exercises its power over them, its subordinates, with great aplomb."³⁶

Despite this lengthy, robust, but conciliatory plea for understanding, Stasov remained convinced of Repin's error and the two ceased direct communication for the next five years. Stasov's ideological patience with his former charge had been severely tested

since Repin's departure from the Peredvizhniki in 1891, and his eventual decision to join the Academy was merely the last straw on an already laden back. But apart from the general noises of discontent and dissatisfaction with the Society, dating back to his first resignation in 1887, and his increasing preoccupation with formal concerns, Repin further antagonised Stasov with a series of articles, *Letters on Art*, written for the St. Petersburg journal *Teatralnaya Gazeta*.

Between accepting a professorship at the Academy and assuming his duties in 1894, Repin, with his son Yury, toured Europe, taking in Warsaw, Cracow, Vienna, Munich, Florence, Venice, Rome, Naples, Palermo, Sienna and Paris, between November 1893 – May 1894. The *Letters on Art*, ten in all,³⁷ were written *en route* as a series of elongated artistic postcards, and though he was critical of much of the dead routine of European art education, his consistent appeals for an independent weight of importance to be accorded the aesthetic and plastic side of art, left Stasov dismayed and incredulous.³⁸

Repin was particularly concerned with educational methods and praised the Munich Academy in particular for instilling the practise of working from nature, with its large, freely administered studios, where students posed their own models as they saw fit.³⁹ But the apostasy of his new views obscured these practical considerations and Stasov was not wrong to discern an attack on all that he had so earnestly championed. There were areas of concord between the two; Repin for instance was dismissive of the spring *Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, a venue for both Post-Impressionist and Symbolists camps. The later Impressionists were, to his mind, degenerating, falling into a routine of violent and eccentric colour combinations, whilst the Symbolists he characterised as "...mass dilettantism, bad taste, illiteracy, and a quasi-artistic lack of finish."⁴⁰

But in his very first letter Repin lavished praise on the aesthetic and technical merits of Karl Bryullov,⁴¹ the very artist with whom Stasov began his castigation of the Academy in 1861, providing a springboard for his promotion of the new utilitarian, contemporary and nationalist school. Stasov had then derided Bryullov as a simple man,

a subservient tool of Italianate melodrama, neglecting the emergence of the Russian school of art, empty, overrated, a symbol of outmoded aesthetics.⁴² And here was Repin, his protégé, holding up Bryullov's genius as the victim of the 1860s fashion for iconoclasm, in characteristically unrestrained style:

"The barbarians came to rule... Art's autonomy was relegated to the last, as something unnecessary, retarding the perception, acquainted with outmoded aesthetics. 'Art for art's sake' was then a vulgar, disgraceful phrase for an artist, smacking of dissipation and pedantry. Artists sought to educate and edify society in order not to feel parasitical, dissipators and therefore worthless."⁴³

Repin epitomised his change of attitude:

"I will deal only with art and even only of the plastic aspect, art for art's sake. For I confess that it alone, in its own right, now interests me. No good intentions by an author will make me stop before a bad canvas. In my eyes he is the more contemptible for having taken on something which is not his business, behaving like a charlatan in unfamiliar territory, exploiting the ignorance of the viewer. And again I confess: any useless trifle executed with artistic skill delicately, gracefully, with passion, delights me no end..."⁴⁴

Repin's notion of art for art's sake should not, regardless of this confession, be taken too literally as an isolated concern for the formal, plastic side of his profession. His list of "useless trifles" includes: "...a house, a campanile, a Roman Catholic church, a screen, a portrait, a drama, an idyll."⁴⁵ Whilst still entrenched in this aesthetic phase he wrote of contemporary art:

"The fashion today is for the poetry of colours, illusion of tones... But the more refined people become, the more quickly they tire of simply repeating sensations, and seek out new ones... And already we see that the archaic art of symbolism and ideas about a new order are arising. But this sick psychopathic diversion does not have the same appeal to all. As soon as society begins to feel healthy again, it will feel a need for realistic, healthy, epic art, as it was in the time of Homer."⁴⁶

It seems clear that Repin, whose works were always innately considerate of painterly concerns, was anxious to redress the imbalance which had so long flown in the direction of content alone, but in so doing his zealous preaching outstripped the practice, and

his intermittent adherence to the narrative and didacticism of the sixties' ideology, in works which will be considered later in this chapter, resulted once more in ambiguities and inconsistencies.

Another pro-aesthetic essay, *In Defence of the New Academy*,⁴⁷ published when Repin had taken up his duties, soon forced Stasov into print. Having pointed out that Repin's previous list of "useless trifles" was anything but, he praised Repin's *oeuvre* as being based on his reaction against academic routine and his beneficial contact with Kramskoy. And now, Stasov ruefully proclaimed, he adores the academicism of Bryullov:

"Several of Repin's close friends have said 'Repin is dead'. The present Repin certainly bears no relation to the former. Similar ideas guided his recent article on Ge, that there is too much 'content' and too many 'ideas' in our art. He spoke further of ancient sculpture, and of Michelangelo, Murillo, Veronese, Titian, Rembrandt, Velazquez and Fortuny — all as having significance only as art for art's sake.

He follows Parisian ideas of forms and colour and fails to realise that to some art is not an ornament, it is an expression of thoughts, feelings, an expression of life...The pretensions are chiefly on the European side."⁴⁸

Despite his inconsistencies and confusions Repin clearly sought out new avenues of expression and the overriding tone of his thoughts at this time is progressive and experimental, evincing a willingness to think afresh, to re-learn, even from younger, less experienced artists. These attributes, as well as the inconsistencies, are reflected in his relations with his students.

*Repin as a teacher*⁴⁹

Repin's commitment to teaching at the Academy was sincere and thoughtful, a fact reflected in his initial fear of the responsibility involved:

"I am now often terrified at the thought of my new official teaching position. I am afraid that I will not be up to it, that I will break off and run away. It seems so hard in practice."⁵⁰

His fears, however, were unfounded, and early the following year he wrote of his enjoyment of teaching, and of the beneficial effects of contact with his students.⁵¹ He was extremely popular, consistently

presiding over the most attended classes, even poaching, unintentionally, from his colleagues.⁵²

Amongst the prerequisites to his joining the reformed Academy Repin placed a premium on the guarantee of pedagogic freedom, to encourage talent in whatever manner he saw fit, to guide rather than lead by the nose or teach by rote, and for the right of students to freely choose the classes in which they wished to study. He led by example, on the studio floor, eschewing the aloof lecture hall approach which he had endured as a student in the 1860s.⁵³ Amongst many projects, designed like the *Exhibition of Experiments*, to draw students and teacher closer together in the consideration and solution of artistic problems, Repin instigated the novel idea of the entire class participating on a joint canvas, depicting themselves at work in the Academic studio.⁵⁴

The *Exhibition of Experiments* was also symptomatic of the style of teaching in Repin's studio. Whilst stressing the need for a full command of materials and an adherence to the tradition of cumulative observation and hard work, he was keen to emphasise the need to work from life, and the positive role of the intermediary stages of artistic development, particularly the use of the sketch to develop ideas, rather than a reliance on contrived, schematic formulae.⁵⁵ The *Exhibition of Experiments*, which Repin mounted at his own risk, was the most notable manifestation of this, and the Academy's refusal to allow it exhibition space a reminder that this aspect of teaching, now considered fundamental, was then regarded with suspicion and alarm as a possible route to artistic disorder.

Repin, however, was careful to circumvent the deleterious effects of students becoming preoccupied with sketchiness to the exclusion of all else, distinguishing between the positive, calculating disregard of fine detail, for which he admired Velazquez,⁵⁶ and lack of finish as an affected style. He praised, for instance, Serov's portrait of P.V. Zhukovsky, son of the poet, for its purposeful, enhancing, incomplete nature, comparing Serov's thoughtful, and aesthetically pleasing output favourably with Korovin's chasings after "effects of light", as an end in itself.⁵⁷

Repin's own obsession with artistic integrity was also expounded in

his classes. He encouraged copying from the masters, particularly Rembrandt, Velazquez and Hals, as well as the Russian masters Bryullov and Ivanov, but fiercely discouraged imitation, especially of his own work.⁵⁸ In the ninth of his *Letters on Art* he had warned:

"Regardless of all my adoration for the art of the great masters of Greece, Italy, and many others, I am convinced that attraction to them, to the point of imitation, is ruinous for the artist.

Notwithstanding how enchanted you are by an artist of an old, outdated school, it is essential that you quickly escape his influence and assert your independence, ruthlessly annihilate the slightest similarity to him, and strive after your own ideals and tastes, whatever they be."⁵⁹

But despite the popularity, liberality and informality of Repin's teaching methods, (these included painting trips to the Academy's dacha, usually reserved for the landscape classes, and a continuance of the at home 'Wednesdays', where Vrubel first met Repin), he bequeathed no new school to the nation and the success of his pupils was patchy. Amongst the better known, chiefly for their later associations with Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva*, are Konstantin Somov and Ivan Bilibin, whilst elsewhere only Boris Kustodiev and Filip Malyavin have earned any significant reputation. Others, like Igor Grabar and Isaak Brodsky have become household names in the Soviet Union, but the remainder, names such as Kardovsky, Feshin, N. Petrov, I.E. Braz (to whom Repin entrusted Chekhov's portrait), Sorin, Lakhovsky, Grabovsky, Kiseleva, Lyubimov, Drozdov, Kulikov, et al, remain undistinguished.⁶⁰

The most illustrious of Repin's pupils, and significantly the one who enjoyed the longest exposure to his influence, was Serov, who became his pupil at the age of nine, in Paris, after the death of his father.⁶¹ Serov's genius, which is now widely regarded both in the East and the West, is perhaps, on its own, a vindication of Repin's methods of artistic inculcation. And though this is a lone name one could not wish for a more eminent one.

Repin never saw himself as instigating a new school of art, though he did wish to change the traditional methods of instruction. The dearth of illustrious pupils emanating from his tutelage is, of course, in great measure due to the rapid changes affecting the art scene during the 1890s and beyond, which outpaced the liberality of

the new Academy and obscured even its best pupils. But in part the very freedom of Repin's classes, instilling a sense of independence and self esteem, an artistic imperative to 'know thyself', contributed to the heterogeneous styles and different directions which his former pupils assumed. Brodsky, a painter of exceptional technical gifts, became the doyen of Soviet Socialist Realism, Grabar, a tasteful, painterly purveyor of still-lives and lyrical winter scenes, Bilibin a mediaevalist illustrator and graphic designer *par excellence*, Somov a delicate but vibrant exponent of nostalgia and mild eroticism, and Kustodiev a talented and colourful chronicler of the decorative lives of the merchant class, especially their buxom, creamy-skinned wives. Malyavin, like Vrubel, a highly individual talent, became synonymous with his wildly coloured, sometimes symbolic, swirling figures of peasant women in sarafans, though he was also a gifted portraitist, and is an artist whose reputation continues to grow.

From the many memoirs which his pupils left it is clear that they regarded Repin as eccentric, unorthodox, but sincere. Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva praised his exceptional ability as an artist but complained that he had no methodological approach to teaching, and that in his tastes he would often contradict himself, though even in the act of contradicting himself she was sure that on each occasion he was sincere at the time.⁶² Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, now a recognised Russian master of graphic and decorative art, who failed to gain entrance to Repin's class, recalled circulation in students circles of many curious incidents and anecdotes about Repin's teaching. Some of these he had at firsthand, from friends studying at the Academy:

"Repin confused his students. One time they were praised to the skies ('Ah! how wonderful that I must teach you'), the next, sometimes in one and the same day, he plunged into despair and said harsh things, amongst them: 'Why on earth have you taken up art when there are so many other interesting professions...'"⁶³

Repin's mercurial nature and the absence of a systematic educational programme did occasion some complaints,⁶⁴ but these were in fewer proportion to those who appreciated his honest endeavours to create an atmosphere of freedom and artistic investigation, and above all Repin's talent as an artist. Ivan Bilibin commented:

"Ilya Repin was a different kind of teacher...he did not effuse enthusiasm like a fire-spitting volcano. He entered the studio quietly, but all the same everyone was aware that Repin had come..."

In any branch of art a pupil will have a particular respect for a teacher if he sees that the latter is not only correct in the advice he gives, but that he can also practise what he preaches. There are some teachers who prefer to talk and not take the pencil or the brush from the pupil, but the pupil always senses this...Repin was one of those rare masters who thought and talked in forms and lines as simply as we think and talk to each other in words."⁶⁵

Paul Sepp, an Estonian artist who graduated from the Academy into obscurity, left a telling account of Repin's involvement with, and commitment to, his pupils, recalling how the artist was moved to tears of injustice when Malyavin's painting, *Laughter*, was rejected by the Academic jury for a scholarship for foreign travel.⁶⁶ Repin's judgment was later vindicated when the painting won a Gold Medal at the Paris World Exhibition in 1900, though his support for the controversial Malyavin caused the onset of an eventually fateful aggravation with some of his Academic colleagues.⁶⁷

Repin also became involved during the mid-nineties with teaching at the private art studio of Princess Maria Tenisheva, a wealthy art patroness whose work in reviving and stimulating the peasant arts and crafts on her estate at Talashkino, mirrored the endeavours of Mamontov at Abramtsevo.⁶⁸ The idea was to establish a preparatory class for students who wished to attend the Academy, but who fell short of the entrance requirements; much in the same way that the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts had supported Repin in 1863. Both Repin and his son Yury taught there and according to some of his pupils this example of educational egalitarianism accorded more with his tastes than did the Academy.⁶⁹ Writing to Tretyakov of the studio's opening he commented. "I turn away nobody who wants to enter. We need schools."⁷⁰

But eventually Repin's career as a teacher foundered amidst the same administrative wranglings and bureaucratic frustrations which had characterised the Peredvizhniki. The informality and freedom of the Tenisheva studio could not be sustained at the Academy and his own

problems, chiefly his health, which had deteriorated whilst working on *State Council*, meant that his attendances at the Academy class grew fewer and fewer until Penaty became, in effect, his retirement home.⁷¹ On 14 November, 1905, he tendered his resignation⁷² and though he was persuaded to stay on by a deluge of letters and representations from colleagues and students, his strength and patience were running out by late 1907: "I feel wretched even thinking of continuing...To support this damned, banal registration of art is more than blameworthy."⁷³ In October he gave warning of his intention to resign from the 1st November, and put forward Malyavin as a worthy successor.⁷⁴

Repin was perhaps the one artist who could reform and revitalise the Academy and his failure to do so undoubtedly hastened its decline. His fame and popularity drew students of all tastes to his studio, mitigating the Academy's prevailing air of retrogressiveness. Dobuzhinsky, who failed the entrance examination, tried a second time by making a personal appeal to the artist. The Academy, he recalled, held no interest for him, he merely wanted to study under Repin.⁷⁵ And in 1906, when Repin was enticed back to the Academy, he told Stasov:

"I was moved by a mass of letters, from many different, distant places and people, expressing great regrets, reproaches, requests, hopes and so on, demonstrating that I do not have the right, etc.

Four young people turned up in person and declared they had come more than 1000 versts to Petersburg on *my account* alone, that they did not need the Academy, that they were relying on me, that they would not leave without fulfilling their wishes, and that when the students were assembled they would make a terrible demonstration and not leave me in peace...they would find me anywhere."⁷⁶

Though it was perhaps unrealistic to expect Repin to carry the mantle of the Academy's saviour alone, the knowledge of his long term failure was a great disappointment to the artist and as late as 1916 he was still castigating "the living corpse" of the Academy and its artistic off-spring, the "still-born homunculi."⁷⁷

Connections with Mir Iskusstva. Repin and Modernism

Repin's brief flirtation and subsequent war of words with Diaghilev's artistic stable was a watershed which sealed his fate as

Russia's grand old man of painting and a rallying point for the traditionalists. Though he continued to show traces of a receptive and unpredictable turn of mind during the last thirty years of his life, the acrimonious break with *Mir iskusstva*, a school which was subsequently to be accorded great historical importance,⁷⁸ has since characterised the artist as a retrogressive, a point of view not eased either by a Soviet willingness to disassociate him from modern trends, a Western gullibility in accepting Soviet accounts at face value, or Repin's own, intemperate writings, which, though they were no worse than the ripostes issuing from Diaghilev's camp, provide an ample and easy source of misrepresentation. The very public quarrel between Repin and *Mir iskusstva* also brought about a rapprochement with Stasov, who bolstered the artist's flagging confidence, encouraging him to fall back on the old verities of the sixties'.

The nucleus of young aesthetes who formed *Mir iskusstva*, chiefly its guiding lights Diaghilev and Benois, had been in conjunction since the early 1890s, sharing artistic concerns which, like most movements in art, represented a reaction to all that preceded them. Their's was the antithesis of Chernyshevsky's ethics or the Peredvizhnik style and subject matter. An aristocratic, cultivated dilettantism, characterised the movement. A languid ennui and a nostalgia for the elegance of 18th century court life, of Louis XIV's Versailles, was mixed with a fascination with the colourful, picturesque barbarism of mediaeval and mythologic Russia, a coalescence of firebirds, boyars and petrushkas.⁷⁹

The unifying thread which drew the members together was a belief in individualism and hence, whilst their sumptuous journal was typical of the highly decorative, heavily embellished Art Nouveau design, its individual members had varied interests and worked in a variety of styles. The eclecticism of outlook within the group encompassed the work of Puvis de Chavannes, Böcklin, Beardsley, Polenova, Félicien Rops, Levitsky, Degas and Burne-Jones, whilst the first edition of the magazine, devoted to the work of Viktor Vasnetsov, occasioned fierce debate between equally entrenched admirers and detractors.⁸⁰

The *Mir iskusstva* philosophy was decidedly cosmopolitan, stigmatising the Peredvizhniki as uncouth and parochial, espousing

instead all that the thinkers of the sixties had fought against: the credo of a mystical communion with Beauty, and an art divorced from earthly problems, expounding no ideas, invested with an autonomous aesthetic existence. They sought also to establish Russia as an active leader in the mainstream of Western culture which, from 1909, with the phenomenal success of the *Ballet Russe*, a synthesis of their various concerns, they achieved spectacularly. As the realists of Repin's generation had been collectively dubbed 'nihilists', for their political and social probings, so this generation of Petersburg aesthetes were lumped together under the derogatory heading 'decadents', a title which they greatly enjoyed.

Some of the *Mir iskusstva* artists, Somov and Bilibin for instance, had also studied under Repin and, in appreciation of his then aesthetic standpoint, especially the *Letters on Art*, and with regard to his cultural prominence, it was not at all unusual that he should have been asked to contribute to the group's publishing venture, launched in Autumn of 1898, nor to moot the devotion of an entire issue to his work.⁸¹ Repin at this point praised Diaghilev as an inspired and gifted impresario,⁸² and even made some concession to his usual castigation of technical slackness and enigmatic, symbolic content, saying that if done with sincerity even decadent art could have merit. He reserved, however, a more profound, intellectual function to a work of "high art".⁸³

The alliance was nevertheless quickly terminated. Diaghilev's aggressive editorial policy of denigrating the established artists of the day, and berating the press and public for its lack of taste, must be blamed for causing the rift, but once engaged Repin was not reluctant to pursue it with vigour. Early issues contained crude attacks on Vereshchagin and V. Makovsky, a deconstruction of Chernyshevsky's views on art, in favour of Diaghilev's musings on the guiding role of Beauty, and a scathing review of an exhibition by Academic students, blaming the appalling standard of work on their tutors and a harmful exposure to the Peredvizhnik school.⁸⁴ Repin's appeal for a public announcement disassociating him from the journal's views was not met and he resigned from *Mir iskusstva* in April 1899, less than six months from the journal's establishment.

Repin contented himself with an article in defence of the Peredvizhniki and the Academy,⁸⁵ but also, a fact which has been obscured by some of his more colourful language (he called the Finnish painter Gallen-Kallela a "raving lunatic"), opposed Diaghilev's attempts to foist his own supposedly superior knowledge and refined aesthetic sensibilities on an obdurate public. In particular, and with greater liberality than *Mir iskusstva*, he called for recognition of the Peredvizhniki not in isolation, but as part of the evolving framework of Russian and European art, and he severely criticised the commercialism and fashionable hype of the manipulatory modern art scene, the artificial manufacturing of artistic ideologies, planned on paper and born out of media campaigns, rather than evolving from necessity. *Mir iskusstva*, he declared, stood for:

"...decadence, in its literal meaning. Its ideal is atavism in art. Dilettantism forms the school's principle...the free and easy dilettantes have sensed the ground for anarchy in art and are making careers for themselves..."

The market price is what now determines the merit of works of art. Art dealers must take the place of professors; they know the tastes and requirements of the customers. They create the artists' fame....They hasten to sling mud at their own, to wipe them out completely, leaving only a slavish imitation of the latest fashion, established in the Rue le Peletier [the location of the Durand-Ruel gallery]. In your philosophisings on art you disregard the Russian, you do not acknowledge the existence of a Russian school. Like a stranger to Russia, you do not know it."⁸⁶

In reply *Mir iskusstva* reprinted Repin's address together with a predictably robust rejoinder by Diaghilev, accusing Repin of renouncing the views on "pure art", propounded in his *Letters on Art* and elsewhere.⁸⁷

At this point, sensing that the time was propitious, Stasov re-entered the fray to defend Repin and make his peace. With breathtaking audacity his article, 'A Miraculous Miracle', upbraided *Mir iskusstva* for suggesting that Repin had recanted his views on the Academy, maintaining that the artist had always made a distinction between the old Academy, "an artistic despot, pedant, formalist and a false teacher", and the new Academy, antithesis of all that the old one stood for: "How is it possible to confuse the two academies, and

wilfully reproach Repin, inverting his sympathies and antipathies?"⁸⁸

In a characteristic piece of writing Stasov greeted Repin's return to the fold as a resurrection, likening him to one saved from death, an intellectual death, the death of his talent and strength:

"...he is saved, he has been brought back to life again and is once more spreading his wings, he can return to his former important matters...Repin, known and loved by everybody in Russia, respected throughout Europe...Even those most sincerely devoted to Repin dared not hope for a recovery from such an illness. He seemed beyond hope. But suddenly, a wonderful miracle! The hopeless patient rallied, recovered, found within himself his former strengths, took up his bed and walked. He became once more the old Repin...Now everything has returned to normal, the troubled waters are stilled."⁸⁹

Though currently beleaguered Repin was not happy with Stasov's crude arrogation of his artistic allegiance,⁹⁰ but the rift was shortly healed and in September Repin resumed his correspondence with his old friend and adversary, pronouncing, "I am just the same as I remember myself. I am just as I was in my early youth."⁹¹

The fight between Repin and the forces of modernism was now fully engaged and continued through many decades, beyond *Mir iskusstva*, encompassing schools of artistic thought which even the progressive aesthetes of the 1890s found alarmingly incomprehensible. Stasov's reattachment to Repin, at a time when he most needed an ally, dragged the artist's reputation, previously dubbed radical or, in the 1890s, just proving to be experimental, into the conservative camp, a fact which Repin did too little to counter. Acceptance of the commission for the *State Council*, and receipt of the Legion of Honour from the French Government, both in 1901, can only have served to underline his position as part of the artistic establishment.

In December of 1899 a fresh row erupted over a speech Repin gave to mark Bryullov's centenary celebrations, in which he praised the artist's clarity and technical mastery, holding his work up as academicism at its very best.⁹² Another rebuff from *Mir iskusstva* stigmatised Repin's remarks as "nonsense", to which Repin replied with accusations of elitism, to which *Mir iskusstva* countered in like vein,⁹³ and so the pattern for future art criticism and artistic debate, a ceaseless round of negative journalistic strike and

counter-strike, was established.

Repin was not in the least adverse to meeting his critics on their own terms, engaging in loud, brash and crude assessments, and indulging in journalistic sensationalism, but his intemperate observations on the rise of modernism, firstly decadence and later the futurists, were matched if not surpassed by his young adversaries. The castigation of novelty and insincerity in art, which characterised Repin's pronouncements on decadence and symbolism during the 1890s,⁹⁴ now became more entrenched and acerbic, as the purely formalist trends of the early 1900s began to assert themselves. The shock of the new polarised debate no less sharply than had the Slavophile-Westerniser question, and Repin's stance, though sometimes expressed in lamentable terminology, seems not illogical for one whose whole life had been dedicated to the cause of technical competence and the elucidation of meaningful content.

In May of 1910 he published two of his most damningly negative reviews of modernist exhibitions. The first involved the *Izdebsky Salon*, an innovative collaboration between the Munich School, which included Kandinsky, and Russian artists such as Larionov, Goncharova and David Burlyuk.⁹⁵ Repin spoke of a "cynical hell of Western mediocrity, hooligans, unruly revellers", of "sick psychologies", and of the Devil, "cynically spitting on the essence of beauty, life and nature."⁹⁶

The second article, reviewing an exhibition by Leon Bakst and Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, students of Zvantseva's school in St. Petersburg, was aimed at the corrupting influence of Diaghilev and Benois on Bakst. In particularly spicy mood Repin referred to Bakst's work as "syphilis" and "leprosy", and Benois as "a dilettante who has never studied forms," one who, as a critic, "serves the young, the new artistic fashions, and kicks the old men". Bakst, he held, was a promising artist, superior to either of his mentors, yet had allowed his talent to be channelled into deviant and decadent forms: "Shame on you, Bakst!"⁹⁷

Yet if one can look beyond the inflammatory invective Repin does have some pertinent points to make. His condemnation of Benois is tempered with praise for his work as a bibliographer, illustrator and

publisher. He also expresses great respect for the energetic Diaghilev as an organiser of exhibitions, a "colossal impresario", but he avers: "He is not an artist nor an authority on drawing and it is not logical for an artist to lean on him...this is the business of professionals."⁹⁸

His comments are, undoubtedly, backhanded compliments, yet an element of truth in both assertions is obscured by the salty language. Diaghilev was indeed a great impresario, but it is pertinent to point out that he was not himself a practising artist. And Benois' career as a critic was certainly questionable. His *History of Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century*,⁹⁹ an amalgamation of arrogance and social snobbery, written from the premise that the author is the sole arbiter of artistic taste, consigned the Russian realist school to the dustbin in the crudest terms, simultaneously slanting its approach to justify the author's late 19th century colleagues as the ideal realisation of art for art's sake. In the hands of a more sober writer Repin's underlying criticism of Benois makes much more sense:

"...you deplore the coldness of the public, their lack of respect for the artist. But who is at the root of this evil? Who for the last ten years has systematically belittled his fellow-painters in a most disparaging manner, and in his History of Russian Art mocked our greatest artists, vilifying honoured names - the better to shine on the darkened background?"¹⁰⁰

Repin has only himself to blame that the immoderation of his language, with its penchant for medical similes - syphilis, leprosy, invalids, maniacs - lends itself to pungent quotations in support of an anti-Western, anti-modernist stance, and that any serious and sincere observations on the contemporary art scene are overshadowed by a conscious design, aware of his standing as the nation's leading realist, to pander to popular prejudices. Though Stasov had died in 1906 it is hard not to see Repin as having donned the critic's mantle, often defeating his own objective by publicising contentious exhibitions which might otherwise have received less attention.

Other notable débâcles, of which there were many, included Repin's attack on Serov's portrait of the dancer Ida Rubinstein (Russian Museum, 1910), a flat, angular, heavily stylised work, which emphasises its two-dimensional aspect by bleeding the figure of colour

and surrounding her with the thick black line common to much Post-Impressionist work. Though the tight control of the drawing might not readily suggest the comparison, Repin saw shades of Matisse in Serov's work. The now famous collection of Sergei Shchukin, whose acquisitions included works by Matisse, Gauguin, Cézanne and van Gogh, had been opened to the public the previous year, much to Repin's dismay, who discerned the French lack of draughtsmanship and striving after 'effect', being aped in student circles.¹⁰¹ But he was clearly unprepared to see the conservative-minded Serov, whom Repin regarded as his successor, dallying with French corruptions:

"What is it? A galvanised carcass? Such harsh drawing: dry, lifeless, unnatural. What a tortuous line runs down the spine to the divan, the outstretched arm, and the suffering head...What does this have to do with Serov???...Does he really wish to ape Matisse?! And so unsuccessfully at that."¹⁰²

Though Repin later revised his opinion of Serov's portrait, chiefly on the grounds that it was superior to the "decadent" rubbish which surrounded it at the *Mir iskusstva* exhibition of 1912,¹⁰³ the tone of his writing, and the frequency with which similar articles appeared, helped establish him not only as the people's choice for a defender against pernicious outside influences on their home-bred art, but also marked him for decades to come as the emblem of retrogression.¹⁰⁴ And so the good works and even-handed approach which characterised the 1890s, a decade of sincere if not always consistent strivings for new means of expression, and greater freedom within the established channels of training, was effectively undone. The nature of the age, which demanded that all ideological and cultural differences be thrashed out in the public arena, to the death, was partly to blame for the appalling lack of critical standards which both sides brought to their journalistic mud-slingings, but Repin cannot escape the blame for enjoining the fight on similar terms.¹⁰⁵

Though Repin's reactionarism intensified roughly in proportion to the outlandishness of new art forms and the abuse thrown at him by its usually young and inexperienced adherents, the break with *Mir iskusstva* and his rapprochement with Stasov was where the ideological rot began to set in, initiating his conversion from progressivist to

bastion of tradition. It is intriguing to consider what might have been. Had Repin, then the champion of the young, admired by Diaghilev and Benois, a spirited defender of Malyavin's unorthodox, innovative and suspiciously 'decadent' output, not been provoked into a feud by Diaghilev's desire to shock the establishment, had he not healed his rift with Stasov, what then? Much of Repin's liberal artistic stance during the 1890s was born out of his creative *impasse*, but was as much a result of his desire to be admired and looked up to by a new generation of painters. It is tempting to conjecture that, had *Mir iskusstva* continued to fête him, Repin might have been tempted to go further down the modernist road, but with hindsight Diaghilev's imprudence seems merely to have hastened the inevitable.

Despite prevarications, and notwithstanding his art for art's sake pronouncements, Repin remained consistently loyal to his belief in artistic integrity, the "know thyself" principle which precipitated and guided his creative searches during these years. His horror of artistic imitation and assimilation of the style of an individual or current fashion, was as marked during the 1890s, when he advised his students to ruthlessly annihilate the urge to imitate the work of another, as it had been in the 1870s, when his artistic probity was outraged by Kharlamov's pursuit of success by adopting the modish and lucrative brush of Léon Bonnat.

There could scarcely be long-term common ground between one who stressed divorcement from imitation, and a school which elevated it to almost religious proportions. As the artist Prince Sergei Shcherbatov commented:

"There is nothing wrong with an artist drawing part of his inspiration from Old French prints and parks, but the situation becomes preposterous when this same artist thinks of himself as a protagonist, abroad, of contemporary Russian art."¹⁰⁶

As was so often the case, and though one cannot necessarily agree with the route by which he arrives at his conclusions, Stasov's summary of the decade seems most apt:

"Repin's openness and interest in the evolution of art drew him to explore all phenomena, even decadence. He dreamed of a new direction in art of individualism and poetry but it turned out to be dilettantism."¹⁰⁷

Miscellaneous paintings from the 1890s

The new aesthetics professed by Repin during the 1890s were reflected most successfully in his portraits, which make up the bulk of his output during this decade. In particular those of *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest*, *Autumn Bouquet*, *In the Sunlight*, and *Natalya Golovina* all show an increased concern for pleasing painterly effects in a bright, broadly worked style, which contrasts with the precise naturalism and more restricted colour range of previous portraits, such as those of Musorgsky and Pisemsky. Elsewhere, his large scale graphic portraits are concerned with technical experimentation, reflecting the artist's meditations on the role and significance of the sketch as a dependent or autonomous element of artistic expression.

Outside of these paintings, in the sphere of subject or narrative works, for which he was most renowned, Repin produced very little. In part this might be attributed to the burden of duties at the Academy, both teaching and administrative, as well as stints at the Tenisheva studio, which, if one bears in mind his portrait commissions, left little time to indulge in large scale canvases, as he had done during the 1870s-1880s. In part, too, the artistic doldrums which began around 1887, with his growing dissatisfaction with the Peredvizhniki, contributed to a slower and inferior output:

"I work little...I cannot dwell on any of my works seriously - everything seems trifling, not worth the effort. I think it is our illness, the illness of Russian artists, crammed with literature...Our salvation lies in form, in the living beauty of nature, but we crawl into philosophy and morals - how tiresome it is." 108

Yet those canvases which were pursued during this time are curiously inconsistent, vacillating between works which partly vindicate the ethos of his pro-aesthetic writings, or show a heightened concern for precisely researched detail and moralising content. Two works from 1888, when Repin had already resigned once from the Peredvizhniki, are a good measure of this artistic schizophrenia.

The Surgeon E. Pavlov in the Operating Theatre (1888, Ill. 99) might stand as the embodiment of an aesthetically inclined work: a small,

freely painted depiction of modern day science in action, the operating room bathed in daylight, illuminating the participants, who, along with the room itself, are painted in almost monochromatic tones, a variation of the white on white painting exercises which Repin set his students. As subject matter the operation is far from usual, but it is treated in a commonplace manner, expressing its ordinariness for the participants, none of whom, including Pavlov himself, are singled out for particular attention. Nor is there any attempt to extract a story, far less a life or death drama, from such tempting material. As with the altercation regarding *The Archdeacon*, Repin told Tretyakov that he considered this work "not a study, but a painting from nature...",¹⁰⁹ confirming its complete and independent standing.

How incongruously this compares with *St. Nicholas of Myra Delivers the Three Innocent Men* (1888, Ill.100), depicting the saint preventing the executions of some Christians during the reign of the Emperor Licinius, another work which, tellingly, found its way into Alexander III's collection. Repin's fluctuating state of mind is possibly shown in the fact that, despite the subject matter, it is one of his freshest, most colourfully harmonious pieces of painting. But its theatricality, redolent of an artist like Flavitsky at his worst, is lamentably overstressed, and in many other respects – in theme, style, and quality of technique – is akin, if inferior, to the work of the leading Academic, Semiradsky. Tolstoy remarked: "Repin's picture is impossible – it's all invented",¹¹⁰ and Grabar was even harsher, suggesting, perhaps unfairly (if only from a technical point of view), that an Academic student could scarcely have done worse.¹¹¹ Repin himself was the harshest judge of the work. Vera Verevkina recalled his sudden exit from the 17th Peredvizhnik exhibition in 1889, disturbed by its imperfections, and described his distress as like a "sharp physical pain."¹¹²

It might have been thought that these works were symptomatic of Repin's artistic doubts, and that this period, on the eve of the 1890s, would prove a turning point before his embracement of the art for art's sake credo encapsulated in the *Letters on Art*, but having fallen on the side of aesthetics his work continued to exhibit the same anomalies.

In October 1891 Repin first made mention of work on another biblical theme, *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!*,¹¹³ a canvas which was to trouble him throughout the decade. The painting was shown at the 29th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1901 and was later destroyed during the Second World War, but all eye witnesses attest to the artist's confused and irresolute approach to the subject.

As will be considered more fully in the following chapter, Repin had largely avoided religious subjects since his student success with *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead*, in 1871. His return then to spiritual, non concrete subject matter, during this period of estrangement from Stasov, was in keeping with his desire to experiment, but, no doubt to Stasov's great satisfaction, he could not find a satisfactory image.

Zhirkevich's diary for 9th December 1891 records seeing a version with a figure of Christ based on the Turin shroud, which he found spiritually profound, but with a melodramatic Satan, which seemed incompatible.¹¹⁴ On the strength of Zhirkevich's comments Repin erased the figure of Satan before the writer's eyes, attesting to his lack of self confidence at this time if nothing else. A few years later, in 1893, Vera Verevkina saw a version with a single figure amongst stones, against a background of rocks and light, whilst in 1895 Zhirkevich reported seeing Christ set against an urban landscape, representative of the temporal world.¹¹⁵

Despite strenuous reworkings, in an attempt to find the right image, including, ironically, approaches to Gericault and Tolstoy, both of whom he criticised in his memoir of the artist in 1894, Repin acknowledged that the painting was a failure, later expressing a regret that it was not destroyed in the fire which damaged his studio in March 1900.¹¹⁶

Stasov was unhappy with the work, comparing it unfavourably with the *State Council* and concluding: "...he is not suited to allegory, but to reality and truth."¹¹⁷ Repin had been at pains to hide the work from Stasov, Rosa Newmarch recalling an episode during a visit to Penaty with the artist looking for a pretext to get Stasov out of the way before rushing her up to his studio, where the painting was hidden behind a curtain. Although she was not pleased with the work, her

description does confirm Repin's desire to break out of the sphere of actuality:

"Doubtless some symbolism underlay the work, but it was undecipherable at the first glance. The colouring was as unnatural as the composition. The work took my breath away. It was so utterly unlike anything that the painter had produced before, that I was ready to believe it had been produced under the spell of some hypnotic suggestion of an unearthly kind. On the dizzy summit of the mountain stood two figures: a weak and strangely unconvincing Christ, and a corpulent flaccid and effeminate Satan; absolutely repellent, without a single persuasive quality. No averagely good and honest man, let alone the Christ, would have suffered an instant's temptation from the presence or speech of such an apparition."¹¹⁸

The anomaly which underlies work on *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* is not the artist's quest to perfect the desired image, as he had done with *They Did Not Expect Him*, but that he should seek to tackle such a profound and difficult subject, to encapsulate in two painted figures the spiritual essence and philosophical significance of Christ's renunciation of worldly power, at a time when he was preaching the doctrine of painterly "trifles", deprecating the Russian penchant for moralising and philosophising, and holding forth on Ge's pretensions in art, namely the reliance on 'content' and 'ideas'.

Other trifles at this time included work on a painting of the crucifixion, *Calvary* (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev, 1896), and whilst planning a painting of *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane*, in 1893, Repin put Chekhov to considerable trouble in establishing whether the moon had been visible that night,¹¹⁹ a touch which betrays the scrupulous physical accuracy and meticulous pre-planning of the realist school.

Another of Repin's main works of the decade, also in moralistic vein, is *The Duel*, (1896, Ill.101), a medium sized canvas first shown, of all places, at the *Exhibition of Experiments*, despite Repin's previous assurance that the show would exclude, "portraits, studies, and completely finished works..."¹²⁰ A dramatic piece of narrative, the painting depicts the tragic death of a young officer, and the awakening conscience of the murderer to his crime, seen here leaving the scene in a semi trance-like state whilst one of the seconds gestures to him to return and make his peace.

Repin repeated the theme in two more variants of that year and another in 1913, each time increasing the pathos by depicting the actual reconciliation of the two men. Though the work and its message was clearly dear to him, each version became less subtle, and the final work of 1913 shows the dying man conferring his forgiveness with a grand gesture of the arm, whilst the assailant buries his face in his hands in a most melodramatic pose.¹²¹

The first version was deeply appreciated by Tolstoy, who saw the work in 1897 at Repin's apartment and, as he had been with *Ivan the Terrible*, was reportedly moved to tears by its theme of forgiveness in death.¹²² One of the 1896 versions was subsequently exhibited in Venice, at the *Second International Exhibition of Art* where, according to Grabar, it enjoyed a phenomenal success with the public and critics, winning a Medal of Honour. Press reports praised its depiction of the wooded scene, the open air and early morning sunlight: "il luce di Repin".¹²³

Its inclusion in the *Exhibition of Experiments* is perhaps explained by the fact that Repin considered it unfinished, merely a study, and took umbrage when Stasov described it as a painting. According to the artist the Italians had been correct to judge it from a technical and aesthetic point of view.¹²⁴

As with previous works, like *On a Turf Seat* (Ill. 20) and *On a Park Bridge* (Ill. 41), *The Duel* can quite rightly be regarded as a fine piece of *plein air* painting, rendered in a rough and hurried manner. But notwithstanding its unfinished state, in Repin's suggestion that it should be approached from a technical stance one is reminded of the consternation caused by the French writers who praised *Burlaki* for its rendition of sunlight and searing heat, but who neglected to mention the haulers. Is one to take seriously the suggestion that the viewer consider the painting's formal aspects and ignore the moral drama, the violent death, which occupies the major part of the work?

A point which mitigates in Repin's favour is that, according to a memoir by the surgeon and collector, A. P. Langovoi, the otherwise sorry content is based on a true incident, the reporting of which moved the artist profoundly.¹²⁵ The work is at least then not a lachrymose fabrication. But this does not detract from the fact that

the painting's story, with its strong moral content, is sharply at odds with Repin's avowed devotion to formal and painterly concerns, and his castigation of philosophising narrative. The very fact that the work was based on real events betrays the artist's orthodox, realist manner of working, and Stasov, though overstating his case somewhat, justifiably remarked on the obvious contradiction between Repin's words and his deeds at this time:

"Anyone seeing *The Duel* at the 1897 International Exhibition in Venice could not fail to recognise his personal artistic stamp, unchanged. He remained as powerful as ever, a talented, distinctive, original, national, and deeply expressive artist."²⁶

The side of Repin's protean character which manifests a traditional dedication to meaningful content and meticulous artistic construction has, however, its obverse. *A Byelorussian* (1892, Ill.102), like *A Lively Girl* (Ill.91) *Autumn Bouquet* (Ill.92) and *In the Sunlight* (Ill.93), is a good example of Repin's new found precepts being put into practise. Again, significantly, it was painted away from St. Petersburg, in the relaxed atmosphere of the artist's estate at Zdravnevo, which he purchased in May of 1892.

His periods of residency here were artistically very successful as, once more, he fell into a relaxed routine of painting from nature, resulting in fresh, bright, intimate portraits. In a number of letters to Tatyana Tolstoy of this period one can sense the creative tension of the capital, his wranglings with the Peredvizhniki and Stasov, and his apprehension about the task confronting him at the Academy, begin to unwind: "I am now living exclusively for my art," he wrote.²⁷ Soon afterwards, settled in the countryside, he describes a routine of early rising, up at four, sometimes three in the morning, to work in the open air, close to nature.²⁸ Work on two *plein air* portraits soon followed, *Autumn Bouquet* and *The Hunter* (Zilbershtein Collection, Moscow, 1892), a portrait of the artist's daughter Nadya in a hunter's outfit, a rifle slung over her shoulder. There was even an attempt at a rare landscape (a sure sign of the artist's relaxed temperament), a sunrise over the Neva. An air of semi-religious communing with nature pervades his correspondence at this time, reminiscent of Turner's

credo, that the 'Sun is God': "Every morning, like Pythagoras, I prepare to sing hymns to it - so majestic is it."¹²⁹

A Byelorussian, depicting Sidor Ivanovich Shavrov, a peasant from the village of Sakharovo, in festive dress, was perhaps the most successful of paintings resulting from this unstressful atmosphere. In technique it is freer, and in composition more laconic, even than *Autumn Bouquet*. Executed in a rough sketchy manner, a blurred green background provides only a hint of a setting, the inconsequential subject being no more than the ingenuous young man, posed against a diagonally placed wooden pole. This, as in the earlier portrait of Vera Repin, *A Lively Girl*, provides the only reference point in a canvas which otherwise eschews spacial recession.

A more complex but similarly unpretentious canvas is the ironically titled *Young Ladies Walking among a Herd of Cows* (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev, 1896),¹³⁰ showing Repin's smartly dressed daughters touring the estate, their cultivated demureness somewhat deflated by the intrusion of a peasant girl driving her cattle across their path. Again, the brightly lit outdoor scene and the simple, unimportant subject matter, exemplified by this and other works from Zdravnevo, are closer than most to the spirit of Repin's writings at this time, approximating as well as a church or campanile to artistic trifles, and executed with a manifest delight in the formal, painterly side of his talent. This becomes even more apparent if one juxtaposes these works with the concurrent *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* and *The Duel*.

Yet despite the artist's freedom, freshness and obvious enjoyment with rendering the purely aesthetic qualities of subjects in these works, one might question whether such motives can be specifically imputed to a change of outlook occurring from the late 1880s onwards. The much earlier portrait of the artist's daughter Vera, seen squinting into bright sunlight, *Girl with a Bunch of Flowers*, (Ill. 21), was painted in 1878, soon after Repin's return from Paris, yet utilises basically the same elements as *A Byelorussian* - an elevated viewpoint, a flat, decorative background and bright *plein air* setting - with perhaps greater success. Whilst Repin, by his own admission, benefitted from his contact with young artists like Serov and Korovin during the late 1880s-1890s, it is clear even from much

earlier, though admittedly less consciously important works, that aesthetic considerations long formed an integral part of his works.

Similar comparisons can be made with *Country House of the Academy of Arts* (1898, Ill. 103), seemingly the epitome of Repin's artistic change of direction, depicting some *pleinairists*, Academic students, at work in their summer retreat.¹³¹ Though somewhat larger in size, its impressionistic style and simple, uneventful subject matter are neither dissimilar nor superior to *On a Turf Seat*, painted fully twenty-two years earlier, and suggest that the 1890s might better be characterised as a reawakening, rather than a new departure.

A problem which led to repeated misunderstandings for Repin's contemporaries, and which exacerbates a judicial consideration of his work even more so today, is one of perception. By comparison with works like *Burlaki*, *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, *They Did Not Expect Him*, and sundry other quintessentially realist works, crammed with happenings, executed with methodical and laborious pre-planning, born out of countless preparatory sketches employed to facilitate the elucidation of a significant content, subjects such as a house, a church, or a group of young women wandering through a herd of cows, are relative trifles. At a time when large scale works like *Vechornitsy*, or even more pertinently, the enormous *Zaporozhye Cossacks*, could be labelled as mere genre, for their lack of a serious moral content or social significance, it becomes easier to understand why Repin regarded a church or a campanile as uncontentious subjects which, like a stone-transporting horse or a view of Montmartre, allowed him to concentrate on the refinements of paint and perception.

As the integral aestheticism of *Ivan the Terrible*, *They Did Not Expect Him*, *Seeing Off a Recruit*, and even staid works like *Alexander III Receives the District Headmen*, *St. Nicholas of Myra*, and *State Council* show, painterly concerns were rarely divorced from Repin's work, but concentration on portraits during this decade was a more acceptable method of grappling with problems of art over content, and though he did not fully relinquish the need for meaningful content, it pervaded his work to a far lesser degree than in previous decades.

A hindrance to the artist in this respect was his consistent avoidance of the genres which best serve these painterly facets,

landscape for instance, or the favourite vehicle of modernism, the still life. The most recent large scale catalogue of Repin's works, containing detailed entries for 327 items, includes only three still lifes and only eight landscapes, five of which are pencil sketches, one a watercolour, one an oil study for *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, and only one an independent work in oils.¹³² It is clear not merely from his writings, but most significantly from his works, that for Repin, to paint for its own sake did not necessitate the abandonment of subject matter, though its retention did serve to confuse the viewer as to his intentions.

A prime example of this is *Wide World* (1903, Ill. 104), a subject which Repin considered ordinary, but which to many (and so it would seem to our eyes) appears an elaborately painted work with a significant if enigmatic content, inviting conjecture as to its 'meaning'. As a winter seascape the rendition of the brown, thickly weeded water, crashing and then retreating across the projecting masses of disintegrating ice, and of the foam flecked sea beyond being whipped up by the winds, the work is technically breathtaking, but Repin simply could not abandon the inclusion of human figures, and though these were intended to express a simple, joyous motif, the love of life, the freedom and exuberance of youth, they detract fatally from the fine study of nature in a wild mood, inviting the search for an underlying message. The American writer, Christian Brinton, was amongst many who were simply baffled by this painting, depicting:

"...a young man in the uniform of a university student and a young woman standing hand in hand amid a madly plunging torrent. On account of its symbolism the public has experienced difficulty in divining the meaning of this picture. Is it a warning, or is it a call to self-sacrifice?"¹³³

Such ruminations are, of course, the legacy of Repin's hey-day, where each fresh work was debated in the light of its philosophical motives, and so he should hardly be surprised that the public were unprepared to see him acting an unfamiliar role. And the same might be said today not merely of *Wide World*, but of many of Repin's most famous canvases which, by their strength of content, have tended to obscure their aesthetic qualities for an audience weaned largely on

aestheticism in isolation, rather than *en suite*.

The experiments of the 1890s did bring rewards and successes, most notably a freer, more aesthetically conscious form of portraiture, but the comparative weakness of his other works at this time highlight Repin's problems. Despite genuine artistic searches and deliberations, his inability to find a fresh means of expression that would match his changing attitudes, forced him to fall back on attempts to encapsulate abstract or emotional conditions through a conventional means of expression which, in *Wide World*, *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* and *The Duel*, produced strained or inappropriate results. Of this, and of the public misconception of his motives, Repin was well aware, which makes his retreat to the artistic lager all the more tragic.

"Like all old men I make myself younger in painting. I painted a young couple, walking on the shore of the Gulf of Finland. It is that time when the sea first begins to freeze over, when the local wind whips the water up towards the shore, breaking the new ice. This amuses the young people, but their boldness is surprising enough to make an old artist paint a picture on the theme. But our public is still so immature as to be startled by this impossible event and ascribe some ulterior motive to it, seeing in it a deep allegory. And on account of this allegory I am in turn abused, blamed and despised."¹³⁴

Wide World was finished and exhibited the same year as *State Council*, by which time the feud with *Mir iskusstva* and the artist's reconciliation with Stasov were fatefully sealed. Without specifically recanting the liberal 1890s, facets of which predated the *Letters on Art* and endured until his death in 1930, a combination of the public clashes with the young forces of decadence, and Stasov's loud proclamation of the resurrection of the 'old' Repin, served to place the artist, in the public's eye, on the conservative side of the trenches. So it was that at a time when Russian art was preparing to march into the age of modernism and internationalism, Stasov was waxing lyrical over the *State Council*, and enthusing, ominously as it turned out for Repin, that: "It is with such precious luggage that Russian art bids farewell to the 19th century and enters the 20th."¹³⁵

Fresh controversies with the Futurists

Repin's last major confrontation with the forces of modernism involved the dreaded 'futurists', a generic term of abuse applied to various representatives of the burgeoning art scene post *Mir iskusstva*.¹³⁶ In 1910, the year that *Mir iskusstva* was relaunched after a four year spell as part of the Muscovite Union of Russian Painters, the 'Knave of Diamonds' group, an amalgamation of artists with leanings towards Russian Neo-primitivism, German Expressionist and early 20th century French painters, such as the Cubists and Fauves, held its first exhibition.

The Knave of Diamonds, including Malevich, Goncharova, David Burlyuk, Kandinsky and Chagall, followed Diaghilev's practice of exhibiting with European artists, amongst them Matisse, Picasso, Braque and Léger. Their combination of folk traditions – primitive scenes derived from *lubki*, toys and tradesmen's signboards – and the formal innovations of France, peaked between 1910-1913, but ran concurrently with a growing reaction against French forms. The 'Donkey's Tail' society, which formed in 1911 and held its first exhibition the following year, and the 'Target' exhibition of 1913, were manifestations of a determination to pursue Russian primitivism exemplified in the crude, naive and bold works of Larionov and Goncharova. But even within these factions the trend towards abstract, purely formal works, was signalled by the appearance of Larionov's 'Rayonism' at the Donkey's Tail exhibition, an art form supposedly based on the creation of spatial forms, evolved from the intersection of rays reflected from other objects. In turn the art scene saw the arrival of Suprematism, launched by Malevich in 1913, based solely on abstract, geometrical forms.¹³⁷

Futurism, as it had been invented in Italy by Filippo Marinetti, in 1909, a politically tinged movement which sought to release Italy from its oppressive cultural heritage, and which later flirted with the Fascist regime, had a considerable impact on the Russian art scene, combining with formal elements of Cubism to create Cubo-Futurism. The Italians' penchant for loud, declamatory manifestos, designed to incite outrage and violence, their iconoclastic, (dare one say

nihilistic?) attitude towards conventional culture, advocating the destruction of museums, galleries, libraries and academies, as well as their glorification of speed, energy, machinery, and their recourse to outré, eccentric, eye-catching forms of dress and behaviour, were all mirrored in the artistic life of Russia in the 1910s.

Since the innumerable factions and cliques which sprang up during this period, espousing often obscure, contradictory, sometimes unintelligible philosophies, were not always comprehended by their various contributors and opponents, it is hardly surprising that the shocked public, Repin included, lumped all of the modernist trends together as 'futurists', a term which, though it encompassed many factions, denoted certain consistencies: the pursuance of purely formal concerns as an artistic end in themselves, the wilful exaggeration, destruction or disregard of natural form and colour, a recourse to deliberately sensational, outrageous actions and proclamations to draw attention to themselves, an intolerant attitude towards their contemporaries and a belligerent, disrespectful or downright abusive attitude towards both the established masters of Western Europe and the current generation of 'establishment' painters, upholders of this tradition.

The catalyst to what was regarded as a national scandal in artistic terms was not, however, one of the frequent attacks on the symbols of authority, nor a call to empty the Hermitage of its moribund contents, but an act of vandalism. On 16 January, 1913, Abram Balashov, an Old Believer and icon painter, in a fit of insanity took a knife to Repin's painting *Ivan the Terrible*, then hanging in the Tretyakov Gallery, inflicting three large gashes on the canvas before he was overpowered.¹³⁸ Balashov's attack showed up a grand irony since, by comparison with the earlier furore of 1885, when *Ivan the Terrible* was regarded as the apogee of radicalism in the visual arts, the canvas, in these days of artistic anarchism, was now recognised as a national masterpiece. And whereas the painting had previously earned Repin almost universal opprobrium, resulting in state censorship, the defilement of this same work now brought about an unprecedented and quite spontaneous cry of public outrage, and the artist was besieged by letters of sympathy and support, which the paper *Русское слово*

collected together and published as a national duty.¹³⁹

The force of this moral outrage was symptomatic both of the time and the place, as the madman's act, a regrettable but unique occurrence, was regarded as having wider, more sinister social implications. A typical reaction came from the editor of *Вечернее время*:

"This disgraceful and incomprehensible action, this piece of savagery is not an isolated instance; it is a genuine sign of the times, when there are no values, no education, a total absence of moral sense."¹⁴⁰

The significance with which the event was invested is reflected by the later celebrations in honour of the painting's restoration. These included a loyal public address, followed by a celebratory meal, at which, hot-foot from appearing in *Boris Gudonov* at the Bolshoi Theatre, the young Shalyapin arrived to sing Repin's praises, before the evening ended in a round of encomiums from those present.¹⁴¹ But before Balashov's handywork was patched up¹⁴² the event had opened up a whole can of ideological worms, and where previously these had been of the socio-political nature which occasioned Pobedonostsev's intervention, they were now of a formal nature, the debate centring around whether *Ivan the Terrible* could even be considered as art.

Repin concurred, to some extent nurtured, the belief that Balashov's actions were an ominous portent, yet given the self confessed Luddite attitudes of the modernists towards traditional art forms, expressed in violent, inflammatory language, it is hardly surprising that he and his peers exhibited a certain amount of xenophobia towards all forms of post-realist art. In Balashov's act Repin saw a metaphor for the destructive spirit abroad in Russia and claimed that the futurists were behind the deed. It seems unlikely that he was seriously suggesting that Balashov acted on behalf of the futurists (as an icon painter and an Old Believer one might have expected his wrath to be visited on the ungodly futurists), but whilst not the personal incarnation of that destructive spirit, he was certainly regarded as the harbinger of the coming cultural pogroms, the existence of which then seemed very real.¹⁴³

Having been repelled by the decadence of Symbolism and the aristocratic aestheticism of *Mir iskusstva*, it seemed to Repin that

modernism had reached a nadir of unintelligible forms and meaningless nomenclature, presided over by vociferous, eccentric exhibitionists. Factionalism had reached its peak, and besides the old order, of which Repin was the exemplar, everybody was fighting everybody. The intransigence which had marked the liberal-conservative wranglings of previous decades, though now pursued along less predictable lines, were as impassioned and embittered as ever, as artistic manifestos, ideological claims and counterclaims, flew in all directions and ubiquitous confrontational debates, reminiscent in style and purpose of the gunfight at the O.K. corral, became the established manner of thrashing out the issues.¹⁴⁴

The modernists, however, felt equally threatened by the forces of reactionarism, which promised to do away with their hard won plurality and return to what Repin vaguely termed 'healthy' art, a form which, they might be certain, would mean a return to a realist hegemony in the arts. United by the force of public outrage, and in their common concern for artistic freedom, the modernists conjoined briefly to arrange a public debate on the *Ivan the Terrible* question, held at the Polytechnic Institute of Moscow. Maksimilian Voloshin, a symbolist poet, and ordinarily no friend of the futurists, gave the first address, a relatively mild affair which bemoaned the low level of a public taste which could consider Repin's canvas a great work of art, instead labelling the painting as "anti-artistic naturalism".¹⁴⁵ David Burlyuk's indecorous, and by all accounts, incomprehensible diatribe followed, and the meeting dissolved into uproar, amidst which Repin gave a rambling response before events degenerated into exchanges of verbal abuse.¹⁴⁶

The level of debate was as low, if not lower than ever, though one might be sceptical as to how much posturing and baiting was prevalent on these occasions. Leonid Pasternak, who regarded the pseudo-intellectualism of the modernist trends as of a "bourgeois and snobbish nature", and under whom Burlyuk studied at the Moscow School, remarked on the many paradoxes of the time, recalling another of Burlyuk's scandalous lectures, 'Pushkin and Khlebnikov', delivered later that year, in November:

"Who could have believed, for example, that D. Burlyuk, after giving his Petersburg lecture in which he vilified utterly the reputations of Pushkin, Tolstoy, Raphael, Repin and Serov, returned to Moscow to take up his place again in my life-drawing class, where he worked assiduously, if unsuccessfully, to finish his study of a model."¹⁴⁷

Whatever the truth, the spectacle of the near seventy year old Repin and these young upstarts slogging it out in so unseemly a manner made for good press copy, a fact which appears to have been lamented by a solitary critic, vainly calling for moderation.¹⁴⁸ The same issue of that journal carried a disapproving account of the hysteria which had surrounded the whole event, in no wise exempting Repin, thought by the rest of the nation to be the injured party, from whipping up controversy over a senseless but unforeseen tragedy:

"For some reason our gazettes see in this lamentable catastrophe grounds for the most incredible art-critical outpourings. They have even found grounds for defending Balashov (!). 'O, Rus!' However, the chief culprit in all these stupid journalistic noises is Repin himself, announcing straight after the catastrophe, in some or other interview, that responsible before Russia for Balashov's actions are 'the modern artists, disrespectful of the old art'... This is foolish and crude."¹⁴⁹

With the coming of the First World War these artistic differences paled somewhat and, unlikely as it might seem, a reconciliation was arranged between Repin and his young judges. The antagonists came face to face in the summer of 1914 at one of the 'open house' meetings in the home of the writer, and later editor of Repin's writings, Kornei Chukovsky, who lived in Kuokkala, close to Penaty. Far from a spirit of rancour, the old rivals sketched one another with good humour¹⁵⁰ and the following year, in late summer 1915, David Burlyuk accompanied the aviator Vasily Kamensky to see Repin, carrying with them some specially composed verses "in honour of the author of *Burlaki* and *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*."¹⁵¹

During their stay Repin was engaged in painting the portrait of the poetess Tatyana Shchepkina-Kupernik, who recorded the event in a verse describing how the futurists had come "submissively" to Repin.¹⁵² Burlyuk appears to accept this, repeating the verse in his account of the meeting, a mellow, good natured piece of writing, in which he makes no attempt to hide his fascination with watching Repin at work,

though Kamensky rejected the 'submissive' charge, imputing their actions to chivalry.¹⁵³ For his part Repin remarked that he was pleased that the futurists had visited him "as equals to equal."¹⁵⁴

Just how far were Repin's written rebukes to the apostles of modernism an accurate reflection of his thinking, or simply knee-jerk, self-defensive reactions, this last remark, and the terms on which he and the futurists met, give cause for consideration. Though Repin cannot escape the blame for his outspoken, pugnacious brand of journalism, the atmosphere at these meetings provides a good indication of how the artist's position of public authority subverted his usually genial, harmonious and inquisitive nature, to which his many students attested, in much the same manner as his reputation as a conveyor of 'thoughts' hindered greater exposition of the aesthetic elements of his work.

Though during this same period Repin was championing the supremacy of Classical Greek art, from Phidias and Praxitiles, down through Raphael, Titian and Bryullov, juxtaposed with the savage, uncultured primitivism of modern art,¹⁵⁵ he nevertheless found time, in the Spring of 1915, to attend the recital of some verses given at Chukovsky's by the *enfant terrible* of modernism, Vladimir Mayakovsky, after which the two artists sketched each other's portraits.¹⁵⁶ Arrangements were also made for Repin to paint a portrait in oils of Mayakovsky, but the artist's enthusiasm collapsed when the poet arrived shorn of the lion's mane hairstyle which had so attracted him to the subject.

The pervading air of toleration which marked Repin's personal encounters with Burlyuk, Mayakovsky and other *avant garde* 'monsters', cannot simply be put down to the condescension of an old man, since Repin enjoyed a lifetime's habit of speaking his mind, and only the year before, aged sixty-nine, this same genial gentleman had distinguished himself as an exponent of artistic demagoguery on a par with the futurists. The swiftness of events between the acrimonious 'debate' at the Moscow Polytechnic and the affable meetings at Kuokkala are but one more example of Repin's variable artistic outlook, which tended to become receptive and pliable in the company of the young, or rigid and dogmatic when reminded of his professional

standing and national responsibilities. A small incident, recorded by Chukovsky, between Repin and V.V. Khlebnikov, to whom Repin was particularly drawn amongst the modernists, well illustrates this:

"One time, sitting on the terrace, at the tea table, and gazing inquisitively at the significant face of the young poet, Repin said to him:

— I must paint your portrait.

Khlebnikov replied weightily:

— David Burlyuk has already done so.

And he added, once more pensively:

— In the form of a triangle.

And again he fell silent for a while.

— But I don't think it was a good likeness."¹⁵⁷

Quite what the nation's leading realist was meant to make of this grave observation one cannot imagine, but whether or not it was intended as such, Repin considered it a witty observation on the 'cubists', as he termed them on this occasion, and took the incident in good humour. One shudders to imagine how Stasov would have greeted a similar reply.

Repin's attitude towards the futurists, and towards modern art trends in the 1910s was, in public, quite obviously what the nation demanded of him, and in this he willingly obliged. It can only be said in his favour that he gave as good as he got, and that crudity, intolerance and illogicality of argument were matched on both sides. The experimental and egalitarian spirit of the 1890s did survive on occasions. In 1912, for instance, he rejected an award from the Kuindzhi Society on the grounds that creative work should not be valued in terms of awards and medals, and between 1913-1915 he was actively involved with a personal scheme to establish free art workshops in the provinces which would admit pupils regardless of class and age, and where no higher title would be held than that of master.¹⁵⁸

Whilst the clash with the futurists was a short-lived affair, the mending of which did credit to all involved, the abiding tragedy for Repin has been that his more animated outbursts have served to bolster Soviet hagiographies of the National Artist, whilst in the West the reputation of Burlyuk and his contemporaries has continued to grow, and where Repin is now mentioned at all it is, quite predictably, as

an artistic dinosaur. Repin has played his part in this process but there is a degree of injustice in it, since his own crime of denying art its way forward is merely the antithesis of the futurists' denial of its ancestry, resulting in a willingness to destroy all that preceded them, a reactionary attitude which perfectly mirrors the worst forms of conservative intransigence, but for which they are seldom accorded criticism. The banner of artistic freedom under which the various modernist factions rallied to defend themselves, clearly did not include the freedom to pursue realist and academic tendencies, showing, like the traditionalists, a willingness to proscribe certain art forms. In relation, however, to the conduct and level on which the artistic debate of the time was approached there seems little to be proud of on either side.

As far then as art trends after *Mir iskusstva* are concerned one can say with authority that Repin rejected modernism and that up to his death in 1930 he saw nothing to contradict his belief in the healthy, life-giving forces of a naturalist style and intelligible content. And yet in his meetings with the futurists in Kuokkala one can readily detect his fascination with the animus of art, to see face to face who these people were and what drove them, even if to him their means, and even more so their ends, were inexplicable.

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CHAPTER 8

Repin at Penaty 1907-1930. Recurring Themes and Stylistic Changes

Cultural Life. Repin and Natalya Nordman

The last thirty or so years of Repin's life have generally been considered an artistic decline since, though he remained busy with a whole host of paintings and cultural activities, no works of significance were produced. The same, with few exceptions, could be said of the 1890s, but until 1907, when he resigned from the Academy, the extraneous duties of teaching made exacting demands on his time.

A combination of ill health, and professional doubts exacerbated by the rapid changes in artistic fashions, and, eventually, his severance from Russia and from his source of patronage following the First World War, all contributed to the poor quality of works produced during this period. After the *State Council* of 1903, arguably his last significant canvas, Repin fell into a routine of continually reworking canvases on recurrent themes, few of which were satisfactorily concluded. The revolution of 1905 brought forth a fresh burst of creative activity, but with little to show for it, and the October Revolution of 1917 produced even less. During this period, whilst maintaining a daily routine of painting and drawing, Repin became increasingly embroiled in literary concerns, writing his memoirs and continuing his journalistic forays into modernist enemy territory. Whilst the output from his studio barely diminished, the large literary legacy which he began to amass from 1908 onwards, was clearly detrimental to his art.¹

Repin's personal circumstances during the first fourteen years of this period, prior to the War, were in sharp contrast to the acrimonious atmosphere of his public life. At Penaty he enjoyed a stable and happy relationship with his partner Natalya Nordman, during which he pursued a hectic social and cultural round, revelling in his standing as the grand old man of Russian art. Nordman (1863-1914), usually referred to as Repin's new 'wife' in Soviet literature, has tended to be a convenient scapegoat for the decline in the artist's creative powers, portrayed as a diverting influence, but she was also the catalyst to nearly fifteen years of busy, well organised cultural

activity at Penaty, galvanising Repin's flagging abilities and self-esteem, but not, alas, inspiring a renaissance.

Repin first met her assisting with Princess Tenisheva's social programmes in 1898, when he was teaching at the Princess's school. The attraction was mutual and the following year he purchased the small estate of Penaty (named after the Roman Gods of the hearth, the Penates), in her name, to secure her property rights, since he had never legally separated from his wife Vera.² Initially a single-storey building, a large studio was later added and the house, ornately and brightly decorated after a Finnish folk style, was greatly extended. During frequent visits after 1900 Penaty became Repin's second home and following his resignation from the Academy in 1907 he settled there permanently, bringing with him the thousands of studies, drawings and watercolours amassed during his professional life, and leaving Zdravnevo in the hands of his daughter Vera.³

Nordman was an original, emancipated, somewhat eccentric, and dynamic woman, with a social conscience and a colourful background. She had enjoyed itinerant adventures in the USA, been a professional photographer, spoke three languages, was well-educated in all of the arts, and, under her pen name Severova, also turned to writing.⁴ The sincere but idiosyncratic regime which she instigated at Penaty excited curiosity as well as amusement, often at the couple's expense, but makes for interesting reading. Repin's own behaviour was, in any event, far from orthodox.

A passionate advocate of vegetarianism, Nordman instructed the local peasants on how to make nutritious meals from hay, wrote and lectured on the evils of class distinction, and championed the cause of animal rights. The writer Ivan Bunin recalled how he was greeted by Repin at Penaty:

"I will paint you during the morning and then we will dine as the Good Lord instructed: on grass, my dear, on grass! You will see how it purifies the body and soul, and soon you will even give up that damned tobacco."⁵

The dumb-struck writer beat a hasty retreat to enjoy the pleasures of a vodka and a smoke in the buffet at the Kuokkala station where, it seems, the staff also ran a profitable line in selling meat sandwiches

to guests leaving Penaty.⁶

Nordman was also punctilious about treating everybody as social equals. A celebrated revolving dining table, equipped with a centrally revolving drum upon which the dishes were placed, enabled the guests to help themselves, whilst handily placed drawers were provided in which to deposit soiled dishes, all of which did away with the need for servants. Meals were preceded by a compulsory session of eurhythmic exercises to gramophone records.⁷ Other household oddities included the Penaty flag, which flew when the couple were in residence, and a series of stentorian notices which greeted their visitors, exhorting them to strike a gong for attention, or directing them to take off their coats and proceed to the next room.⁸

A small theatre in the grounds provided the setting for Sunday open air lectures and concerts, given to all and sundry - illustrious guests and local workers alike. Favourite topics included the arts, naturally, and on Nordman's side, co-operatives, vegetarianism and animal rights.⁹ In all she busied herself with all manner of social and artistic projects, including the support of orphans, hungry students and unemployed teachers,¹⁰ for which she earned a mixture of suspicion and ridicule. Tolstoy, for instance, considered her actions over-complicated and artificial, and was vexed about how to receive her since she was not the artist's true wife.¹¹ Coming from one who was himself a vegetarian, who espoused the cause of social equality (but retained servants), and who tried, without success, to end his own unhappy marriage, these comments seem suspiciously like sour grapes, directed at a woman who was beating the master at his own game.

Repin, however, was devoted to her and came increasingly to lean on her abilities. Fluent in a number of languages, she translated articles on foreign art for him, compiled a bibliography of reviews of his exhibitions, and gave practical assistance with his projects, notably with the *State Council*. Under her goading, in collaboration with Chukovsky, Repin began his first autobiographical writings in 1908, to which he added over the years.¹² Her energy also underlay the busy social life enjoyed in the freer atmosphere of Finland, and their 'Wednesdays' attracted cultural figures from the worlds of art and

science, as well as the establishment, including Gorky, Andreyev¹³ Shalyapin, Cui, Glazunov, and the scientist Ivan Pavlov.

Natalya Nordman died in Switzerland in 1914, seeking a cure for her consumption, but her legacy lived on.¹⁴ The vegetarian diet remained until, during the 1920s, universal hunger forced the artist to recant, though not without some soul-searching:

"I, a strict vegetarian, even excluding milk, butter and eggs, have been compelled by hunger to begin to eat fish... Man is very prone to self-justification. Fish are living beings just as birds are, or every other kind of animal... for more than ten years we practised vegetarianism very happily - N.B. Nordman was so enterprising... But now I am just like all the rest."¹⁵

In the summer of 1915 David Burlyuk noted approvingly that Nordman's signs were still in place, including such imperatives as: "Don't wait for the servants, there are none", "Do everything for yourselves", and "Strike the gong, enter, and disrobe in the anteroom."¹⁶ Repin also wrote a long and affectionate article in her honour, appropriately for the *Vegetarian Review*, in which he acknowledged her good works, noble sentiments and positive influence on his work.¹⁷

This influence, however, like Stasov's, was overpowering and not always for the good. Her outlook, if well intentioned, was as narrowly drawn along the lines of the utilitarian 1860s as was Stasov's, and counteracted the elderly artist's relaxed, easy-going nature. It seems, for instance, not coincidental that the first meeting with the futurists took place whilst she was in Switzerland, and subsequent meetings, with Burlyuk and Mayakovsky, occurred only after her death. She was however a magnificent organiser and personal secretary, who gave Repin the peace, the time, and a conducive atmosphere in which to work, and the failure therefore of his later paintings must rest largely with himself, and not some imagined interference from Nordman. Certainly Repin had only good words for her and Chukovsky recorded that the couple were rarely seen apart.¹⁸

The second phase of Repin's 'retirement', following Nordman's death, the War, and the October Revolution, was spent in increasing isolation and material uncertainty, as the shifting of boundaries left Penaty in independent Finland. The stream of lively and entertaining

visitors dried up, as did his source of patronage, though in November 1917, despite major political upheavals and universal want, time was found for celebrations to mark the 45th jubilee of Repin's creative work (1871-1916), commencing with his first success, *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead*. An exhibition was staged at the Russian Museum and a celebratory dinner was held at the Maly Theatre, though due to power shortages it was conducted by candlelight.¹⁹ In reply to the opening address, Repin's response, which was reportedly hindered by frequent outbursts of applause, was to say that the best memorial he could wish for would be the immediate establishment of the free art workshops in his home town of Chuguyev.²⁰

This was the artist's last visit to the capital before the border with Finland closed in April 1918. His daughter Vera came to live with him in 1922 and as the situation relaxed a few attempts were made to revive the former glories of their salons, but with little success. Financial worries also plagued Repin. Penaty had been bequeathed to the Academy, he was not, strictly speaking, entitled to remain there. Previously Zdravnevo had offered the security of a retirement home, but with the seizure of bank accounts and private property after the Revolution his position was one of continual uncertainty. Nor were "these dark days", as Repin labelled them, significantly lightened until the delegation of artists that visited him in 1926, seeking his return to the Soviet Union, deposited 30,000 roubles to a bank account in his name.²¹

Correspondence and journals kept him in touch with the outside world to some extent, but even so the mentally agile and gregarious artist was driven to the extreme of accepting theosophists and sectarians into his home, to save him, as he put it, from "dying of boredom."²² Personal contacts were of course continued, but these were perforce with the emigre community, natural adversaries of the communist regime, though, as discussed, Repin's attitude here was never clearly defined, wavering between condemnation and predictions of the coming Republic.²³

Foreign exhibitions helped to bring in some money, mostly under Vera's guidance, but increasingly with the assistance of V.F. Levi, a lawyer neighbour in Kuokkala with artistic aspirations.²⁴ But Repin

scorned for a long time the lucrative American market following the bad experience of the 1904 International Art Exhibition in St. Louis, Missouri, when 800 Russian canvases, including his portrait of E.N. Korevo (1903), were sold by the Russian agent in United States in shady circumstances.²⁵ In 1913 he sent a very curt and unhelpful letter to the American critic William Peckham, who was writing an article on Russian art, that after the St. Louis affair, "I promised myself never to have anything to do with Americans in anything connected with art and artists."²⁶ When he eventually agreed to an exhibition in New York, in 1921, it seems to have once more resulted in the loss of works, and in 1924 he declined to participate in a major exhibition of Russian art in New York: "I am not going to America...It is enough that I have suffered there three times already, quite enough."²⁷

Artistic doubts and technical difficulties

It is significant to note, beyond the expected decline in artistic powers associated with old age, that in sharp contrast to the 1870s-1880s, when Repin was in the thick of social and cultural events in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the isolation of Penaty denied him a wider audience for his works, and consequently, though he continued to paint on a daily basis, the creative impetus, artistic satisfaction, or even critical furor, resulting from public showings, was confined generally to reading written reviews, which understandably dampened his motivation.

Beyond the vicissitudes of providing for his material wants Repin was also occupied during these years with doubts about his chosen path in the arts, a state of affairs which traces back to his flirtations with aesthetic and experimental concerns in the 1890s. His attitude towards his own work had always been uncompromising, but a fierce streak of perfectionism ran hand in hand with bouts of real insecurity. His willingness, for instance, to erase the entire figure of Satan in a major canvas, on the critical disapproval of the writer Zhirkevich, considerably less^{of} an authority than Diaghilev, whom Repin accused of meddling in matters outside of his experience, is surely less the sign of a receptive mind than of an irresolute nature.

The process of documenting his life and recording the evolution of key canvases was a chance to re-evaluate his output which, in places, such as the denial of any inherent social criticisms in the *Burlaki*, suggest a retrospective alignment with current trends.²⁹ But doubt and prevarication continued to characterise his work during, and leading up to this period, and it is characteristic of his outlook that the huge manifestation of public support which followed from the vandalising of *Ivan the Terrible*, though it temporarily lifted his spirits, subsequently caused fresh doubts as to his artistic aims. At times his deprecation of his talent, given his singular standing in the Russian visual arts, smacked of irony,³⁰ whilst later on a note of genuine anxiety punctuated his letters.³⁰

The coalescence of artistic doubts and the self imposition of exacting standards frequently led Repin to re-paint his works, usually with detrimental results. The problems experienced with *They Did Not Expect Him*, resulting from genuine artistic searches for a specific image, were nevertheless exacerbated by an unwillingness to leave well alone, even when the patron was satisfied. Vera Verevkina, recalling his sufferings over the unsuccessful outcome of *St. Nicholas of Myra*, expressed her relief that the work was safely hung, preventing the artist from re-painting, remarking that "Repin was at times his own worst enemy and ruthlessly ruined his canvases."³¹ One reviewer of *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, though impressed with the work, was amazed to find it completely unlike the full oil studies he had seen previously, commenting that Repin was known to have occasionally destroyed the fruits of a year or more's work through dissatisfaction, though to those about him they seemed finished pieces.³² *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*, mentioned in chapter 4, was merely one of a long line of works which Repin later over-worked to a point of creative demise. Chukovsky attested:

"...each of his paintings he repainted totally ten, twelve times; that during the creation of one or other composition such despair would overtake him, such bitter lack of confidence in his abilities, that he would in one day destroy a whole canvas on which he had worked several years, and on the next day would again begin to paint it."³³

It seems ironic then that one of the nuggets of artistic wisdom which struck a visitor to Penaty in the 1920s was that "an average artist, if he puts down a good brushstroke, will certainly be unable to resist the temptation to touch it up and so spoil it."³⁴ Clearly Repin did not consider his own perfectionism to fall into this category, but the results were much the same.

In later life this situation worsened until Repin was spending most of his time applying fresh layers of paint to existing canvases, but he continued to work with a wide range of materials, always technically experimenting, searching for alternative, better methods of rendition. In part this was forced upon him as materials became increasingly rare and expensive, but Repin was both resourceful and inventive in overcoming these obstacles. Anton Komashka, a young but impoverished art student, whom Repin met in Chuguyev whilst the artist was discussing his project for the free art workshops, resided at Penaty between 1915-1918, leaving a valuable account of the artist's daily working practises. Apart from a fascinating description of Repin's natural speed and dexterity in front of the model, Komashka gives some indication of the methods and materials used: oils, watercolours, pastels, sanguine, and coloured pencils, applied on canvas, various types of cardboard, linoleum, and oil-cloth.

Using only his left hand at this time, Repin painted with the very largest of bristle brushes and copious quantities of paint, sculpting the figures on his canvas without the benefit of preliminary drawing, simply modelling them freehand. The palette-knife was also a favourite implement with which to work the thickly impasted pigments. Any tool, such as the artist's fingers, would be pressed in to the service of painting, and on occasions Komashka recalled Repin working with a brush he fashioned himself, from paper, and which clearly gave a particularly desired effect.³⁵ Repin was always receptive to technical alternatives, even though they were utilised in the service of a largely unvarying style. His voluptuous portrait of Lidiya Kuznetsova, for instance, was an unconventional experiment with painting *encaustic*, a surprisingly durable technique from ancient Greece, predating the 4th century B.C., which involves mixing the pigments with heated wax. The benefit of rapid drying allows swift, spontaneous

work, and requires a confident hand, but the technical difficulties involved, chiefly with keeping the wax mixture fluid, have met with little favour, and despite the very encouraging results from his first attempt at painting *encaustic*, Repin did not repeat the experiment.³⁶

In considering Repin's late works one notes a discernible loosening of style, a tendency to attenuate or distort form, and to work in a broader, more hurried fashion, as Komashka observed, modelling his canvases out of thickly applied paint like a sculptor. Towards the last decade of his life old age and ill health doubtlessly contributed to the increased expressiveness, almost savagery of forms and the turgid, encrusted surfaces, the legacy of years of over-painting. But it is also possible to observe a wilful experimentation, with form especially, since later portraits, though variable in quality, are frequently well drawn or 'finished', in marked contrast to the exaggerated forms and lively paint surfaces of his thematic canvases.

To what degree these aspects represent simply an artistic disintegration or a late and private experimentation, often on introverted, personal themes, it is difficult to say since, as usual, the public expressions of his writings, as evinced by his support for Isaak Brodsky and the AkhRR as the upholders of the realist tradition, are at odds with the nervously exacerbated style of his own works at the time. One writer, for instance, has likened his late output to the expressionistic styles of Edvard Munch and even Emile Nolde,³⁷ and whilst these artists are typical of the 'barbaric' corruptors of form whom Repin so often lambasted in print, the visual comparison is not inappropriate.

The return to religious themes

There is a tendency in Soviet literature to play down, sometimes to ignore, Repin's involvement with religious painting,³⁸ yet the artist was active in this genre at both ends of his career, even though between these extremes it occupied considerably less of his attention.

From his youthful church commissions, wall paintings and icons, Repin graduated to standardised religious themes as part of his academic training. These were on prescribed themes which students were expected to construct conventionally, as shown by Bruni's instruction

to cut out and rearrange the figures in Repin's unsuccessful composition on *Tobias Anointing the Eyes of His Blind Father*.³⁹ His student works nevertheless revealed important pointers towards future attitudes, both in respect of religious subjects and his artistic approach in general. *The Slaughter of the Egyptian Firstborn* (Museum of the Academy of Arts, Leningrad, 1865) a highly finished, classical work, very much in the manner of Bruni, but with a touch of Delacroix's exoticism, revealed early shades of a penchant for the literal and the lurid. It was approached, according to Repin, from an "exclusively realistic" point of view, so much so that he was asked to tone down the initial sketch which showed the angel of death physically strangling a young child.⁴⁰

A few years later his sketch for a large crucifixion scene, *Calvary*, (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev, 1869), a brooding work, showing the place of execution from a distant viewpoint, with the crucified Christ being slowly hoisted from a horizontal position, against a darkened sky, foreshadowed the ability to handle large crowd scenes to dramatic effect.⁴¹

That same year Repin was awarded a Minor Gold Medal for his painting *Job and His Friends* (1869, Ill. 105), a combination of academic fidelity to setting and characters (both in their dress and their racial types), set against a highly accomplished background of mountain scenery, the fine detail of which is illuminated by a radiant golden light. The painting is an early example of Repin's ability to accommodate aesthetic, painterly concerns in unlikely circumstances, seen here in the fresh, colourful treatment of the landscape and the ethnic clothing of Job's friends, as well as the convincingly emaciated figure of Job himself, and Stasov praised the young artist's ability to breath originality and beauty into even this official, hackneyed task.⁴²

The religious theme also accounted for Repin's first major success prior to the *Burlaki*, revealing once more some salient points which were to guide his future work. *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead* (1871, Ill. 106) secured for Repin the coveted Grand Gold Medal, and with it a scholarship for his foreign travels between 1873-1876. By comparison with former works it is a mature, restrained,

dignified and powerful canvas, totally lacking Bruni's theatricality. A reflective atmosphere pervades and the impending miracle is suggested only by the father's dawning astonishment.

For a student programme piece it is conceived in a surprisingly free manner. The whole of the lower right side is roughly drawn and painted in muted tones, large patches of the picture being left methodically bare – on the flagstoned floor for instance, where the unprimed canvas contributes to the illusion of the sheen of reflected candlelight. Apart from the figures of Christ, and of Jairus's daughter lying on the bier, both of whom are more finely painted, there is little about the execution which could be termed academic.⁴³ Stasov, who was then busy demolishing the academic heritage, exhorted viewers to the first Peredvizhnik exhibition that year not to overlook Repin's canvas, which was hanging elsewhere in the same building.⁴⁴

Repin was influenced in the conception of the work by mature sources, both the rough but assured technique of Rembrandt, and by Aleksandr Ivanov's masterpiece, *The Appearance of Christ to the People*, travelling to Moscow especially to see it anew, looking for inspiration.⁴⁵ He was also at this time imbibing the influence of the *Artel*, and particularly of Kramskoy, who was working on his pensive, serious image of *Christ in the Wilderness* (1872, Ill.107). Though couched in religious iconography, the aims embodied in Kramskoy's work were strongly ethical, the figure of Christ representing the eternal conflict of man's inner struggle with evil, the decisive moment of moral choice.⁴⁶

Repin's work is less concerned with morality than with evoking a mood of emotional gravitas. He was impressed, however, with Kramskoy's seemingly intimate personal relationship with Christ as a living, suffering man, leading him to start work on his own composition of Christ's temptation.⁴⁷ Repin's figure of the Saviour in *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead* is both majestic and spiritually imbued, suggesting that it was not over-reliant on Kramskoy's humanised rendition, but the realist ethic was nevertheless the salvation of the work when, shortly before the competition closed, Repin was still struggling to find the right ethos. He was reminded of the sudden, tragic death of his sister Ustya, in 1857, when he was

only thirteen. She had been the young boy's closest playmate and Repin resurrected his deep sense of personal loss, and the dark, disconsolate mood of the family after their bereavement, successfully incorporating a personal reality into the canvas.⁴⁸ Stasov was quick to exploit this fact, claiming, as with *Tsarevna Sofya* and sundry other works, that the strength of the painting issued solely from the fact that a real, heart-felt experience had guided its conception.⁴⁹

Despite the success of the painting Repin's involvement with religious subjects subsequently went into abeyance. Intermediary works included student formalities, *Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane* (1874), over which he later painted *Stenka Razin*, and *The Resurrection of Christ* (1876),⁵⁰ before he returned to the genre, spasmodically, in the 1880s. Studies were made of *Christ Appearing to His Disciples after the Resurrection* (Russian Museum, 1886), *Christ and Nicodemus* (Russian Museum, 1887), and *The Bearing of the Cross* (Repin Museum, Penaty, 1887). None resulted in finished works but *St. Nicholas of Myra Delivers the Three Innocent Men* followed in 1888. The 1890s were similarly sparse, an oil sketch, *Calvary* (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev, 1896), being a rarity, though Repin was occupied with intense and protracted struggles throughout the decade with *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!*, completed in 1901.

None of these works, however, were completed to his satisfaction, and the religious spirit which he sought eluded him. In returning to these themes in later life he was not then pursuing new paths, but resuming a patchy, though abiding fascination with the spiritual, moral and emotional possibilities of biblical subject matter. The tone now, however, was more sombre and reflective, painted under the impressions of the artist's estrangement from the outside world and of fears for the safety of friends in the Soviet Union, the "dark days" at Penaty.⁵¹ Amongst these was the lawyer, academic and writer A.F. Koni, whom Repin believed dead, until news to the contrary reached him in 1921. Though he was already involved with religious themes the inspiration for two large canvases, *Golgotha* (1922, Ill.108), and *The Morning of the Resurrection* (1922, Ill.109), are traceable directly to reports which had circulated of Repin's death.

"How I rejoiced at the news that you are alive and are lecturing. I too was buried, and even received an emotional obituary with a portrait, from Sweden. How I rejoiced! And that joy gave me the idea for a painting. I have been thinking of how jubilant Christ must have been when He felt that He was alive, and healthy enough to push away the stone (or plinth) blocking the entrance to the compartment of Nicodemus's fine tomb, and went out, frightening the guard, who leapt into the ravine. He went along the road which runs round the walls of Jerusalem, close by which is Golgotha; and on the left, clearly visible, were the crosses with the bodies of the robbers, and in the middle His own cross, already bare, saturated with spilt blood and a pool of blood beneath it. And the corpses with their broken shins were still seeping, creating their own pools, at which the dogs had already gathered to feast. Christ walked on to Gethsemane...

The joy of the resurrection is what I wanted to portray...But how difficult it is. Up to now, despite all my strenuous efforts, I have not succeeded."⁵²

Repin goes on to describe another canvas, almost completed to his satisfaction, which depicts the meeting between Christ and the astonished Mary Magdalene in the garden of Gethsemane. The letter reveals much about Repin's isolated, morbid and contradictory state of mind at the time. It is difficult to reconcile his clearly earnest desire to capture the joy of the resurrection, that pivotal point of spiritual revelation in the Christian doctrine, with the graphic portrayal of two crucified cadavers oozing blood for the local dogs to feast on.

The finished work differs a little from Repin's description. Christ's cross is seen, unusually, to the far right of the three, not in the centre, and the bloodshed is rather less in evidence than one might have expected. The realistic inclusion of the scavenging dogs shows Repin's abiding predilection for occasional sensationalism and lapses in good taste, which can be traced to early precursors such as the Angel of Death strangling the infants, and the dog which studiously licks Job's sores in his canvas of 1869.⁵³ The symbolic possibilities of the dogs in *Golgotha* are perhaps more warranted. Biblical references to wild dogs eating carrion, including human flesh, abound, and the term 'dog', associated with unclean animals, also served as a term of abuse for the cruel and ungodly, an apposite allusion to the desecration taking place. Most pertinently the image

of the dog appears twice in Psalm 22, which corresponds closely to the crucifixion, heightening the sense of Christ's desolation.⁵⁴

The work is nevertheless a powerful depiction of brutality and desolation. A crucifixion without Christ is a singular concept, but Repin makes it clear that it is not the crucifixion, but the resurrection he depicts, and that *Golgotha* represents the events of the morning of the resurrection actually seen through the eyes of the Saviour, who is present but unseen, and this is surely unique in religious art. The air of menace and despair evoked by the corpses and dogs, the gaping black mouth of the tomb, and the billowing dawn mists, contribute, with the rough handling of the paint to the force of the work, which is a fitting stable-mate to Ge's violent crucifixion scenes. Ge's renditions, however, were if shocking at least consistent with the artist's intentions:

"I will shake their minds with Christ's agony. I want them, not to sigh gently, but to howl to the heavens! After seeing my painting they will forget their petty troubles for a long, long time!"⁵⁵

Repin's work sits uneasily with his avowed desire to express not the horror, but the joy of the resurrection.

The Morning of the Resurrection is another emotionally charged canvas painted with less sensationalism but more expressively than *Golgotha*. It is mentioned in another letter to Koni where Repin remarks on his addiction to Biblical themes: "Like a hopeless drunkard, I cannot keep away from evangelistic subjects...they possess me."⁵⁶ It is nevertheless at odds with the description given earlier, that the emotional quality of the Magdelene's surprise at the risen Christ had been successfully captured, suggesting that Repin's more abiding addiction, to re-painting, soon overtook him.⁵⁷

It is again a novel conception, showing the curiously long, slender figure of Christ still wrapped in his winding rags, and bandaged about the head like some living, mummified stick-insect. The work stands now in the studio at Penaty, covered from public gaze by a curtain, a state of affairs reminiscent of how Repin obscured *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* from Stasov's disapproving eyes. The drawing is extremely crude and intense, whilst the paint work is in places so encrusted, built up

layer by layer with consistent re-painting, that it seems to have been applied with a trowel, but elsewhere, (noticeably at the bottom right, and quite visible in reproductions), it is applied in thin coats of wet paint which have careered down and off the canvas. The figure of Christ is extended and contorted almost to breaking point.

There is no denying that Repin's fresh concern for religious subject matter marks a personal spiritual re-awakening, despite Soviet attempts to pass them off as merely moral commentaries. Repin recorded at this time his return to the Orthodox Church, attending services and even singing in the local choir, where previously he had been contemptuous of Dostoyevsky's glorification of that body, and in later life he regretted that ill health prevented him from attending services.⁵⁸ But whether the forms in which he chose to work reflect simply poor health and declining creativity, or, like Ge's later works, an experimentation with expressive exaggeration and dynamic brushwork to heighten the emotional impact, is not clear. Working on another large religious theme at this time, *Doubting Thomas* (1921), Repin blamed the failure of the work on his declining strength, but this does not necessarily account for the crude, seemingly purposeful change of style in these and other religious subjects of the period.⁵⁹

If one accepts, however, that Repin's attitude was both spiritually receptive and artistically inclined to experimentation, the sad fact remains that intriguing as these works are, the encapsulation or expression of spiritual qualities is no more evident than in previous attempts at the genre. *Golgotha*, despite being closer to biblical illustration than religious art, is a powerful swan-song, showing a robust painterliness and force of drama redolent of his hey-day: "His strength, his ability to master the matter, are declining, but his visions are clear and demanding."⁶⁰

Occasionally Repin touched the right nerve, though one cannot be sure if it was intentional. His painting of *The Adolescent Christ in the Temple* (Repin Museum, Penaty, 1920s) is another roughly-hewn work which makes too much of the Christ-child's saintly expression of spiritual fecundity, but which is rendered more successfully in a pen and ink study of a few years earlier (Repin Museum, Penaty, 1918-1919). Here the seated figure of Christ gestures with less

theatricality, and His ecstatic state, no less wide-eyed, is somehow conveyed with more spiritual conviction, the quick, nervous lines reminiscent of Vrubel's Byzantine inspired saints, or of Aleksandr Ivanov's later, expressive Biblical illustrations in watercolour, which in turn have been likened to the metaphysical works of William Blake.⁶¹

It has long been the custom in Soviet writing to deny Repin's ability for, or concern with, religious art,⁶² and of course there are obvious ideological reasons for this. This leads usually to brief, dismissive treatments of these works, or to predictable theses, usually that Repin regarded Christ and John the Baptist as social reformers, come to liberate an oppressed people;⁶³ a not inaccurate view of biblical events, but certainly an incomplete and worldly one.

Stasov too had his motives. Though he singled out *Christ Raising Jarius's Daughter from the Dead* as showing great promise, he was no more willing to see Repin cultivate religious themes than he was historical ones, and declared that this was not where his talents lay.⁶⁴ Tolstoy, in relation to *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* identified the fault with the artist's outlook which, at heart, was that of an unbeliever, making him unequipped for the task.⁶⁵ But though results were patchy Tolstoy did not deny that the spirit occasionally descended on the artist. So moved was he by a work of 1885, *The Sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, that he collaborated with Garshin in writing a text for the picture, to be included in the cheap, accessible, edifying *Posrednik* editions published by Ivan Sytin.

"If you see Repin, tell him that I always loved him, but that his figure of Christ bound me to him more closely than before. I only have to call to mind the face and hand, and tears come to my eyes."⁶⁶

It would seem excessively harsh to classify Repin as a non-believer. In Paris, for instance, during his student days, he regularly attended services at the Russian church,⁶⁷ but it is true that until the last decade or so of his life the Orthodox faith had not figured large in his life. He was manifestly antipathetic towards the ecclesiastical side of organised religion, the worldly power-brokers and state functionaries who appear in *Spurning Confession* and

Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk, and who are embodied in the figure of *The Archdeacon*, but he was far from being an atheist, and it is clear from his early associations with Kramskoy, to his late religious paintings, that Christ for Repin represented a spiritual and moral exemplar, not merely a social reformer. Until his return to the Orthodox faith in the 1920s Repin can best be labelled a Christian without a church, not doubting the verity of Christ's teachings but not finding them, personally, under a particular ecclesiastical banner. But this did not preclude a search for meaning; as he told Tolstoy, "the quest for religion is the greatest thing in our lives!"⁵⁶

In his art at least that quest was never successfully fulfilled, though it was not for the want of trying. But whilst *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead* is touching in its dignity, and the late works are powerful and expressive, they cannot reasonably be seen as spiritually imbued. The constraints of verisimilitude and the literalness of Repin's outlook, which served him so well in the contemporary sphere, severely hamper his sacred subjects. Too much life obscures the spirit and results were too often technically excellent but spiritually devoid, as with *St. Nicholas of Myra*, or brought simply to a painful and unsatisfactory conclusion, as with *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* and *The Morning of the Resurrection*. The Bible, as did history, ultimately offered more to Repin in the shape of emotional and dramatic subject matter, the import of which would be accessible to all, than it did in searching the human soul.

Christian morality also pervaded many of his secular subjects, where often it fared no better — in *The Duel* for instance. But it is ironic that in his depictions of the idealistic sacrifices of the populist martyrs, and most memorably in the forgiveness of the dying Tsarevich towards the grief-crazed Ivan, Repin most successfully conveyed spiritual ideals, albeit that they are couched in ethical terms.

Late fixations: literary and Cossack themes

Repin also worked repetitively during his final years on literary and Cossack themes, though for the same reasons of ill health,

declining powers, over-painting, and attempts to force too much emotional energy into the limitations of realistic representation, results were much the same as with his religious works.

Repin had a great regard for the work of Gogol, a fellow Ukrainian, whose stories he illustrated and who undoubtedly guided the artist's heroic and romantic view of the Cossack race.⁶⁹ In the first decade of the twentieth century he painted a number of works based on events from the writer's own life, including *Nikolai Gogol and Father Matvei* (Russian Museum, 1902), an ethereal watercolour showing the nerve-racked writer wrestling with the invidious influence of the clerical Mephistopheles. The dream-like quality of the work is reminiscent of Fuseli's visual nightmares, whilst the theme is clearly a variation on the Temptation, which had lately occupied him in *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!*, but the wide-eyed Gogol and the leering priest present an unsubtle and unconvincing pair of portraits.

A large oil work of some years later, *The Self-Immolation of Gogol* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1909), shows the distinctly crazed writer throwing the continuation of his master work, *Dead Souls*, into the fire. The limitations of Repin's style are perhaps nowhere better seen in this contorted vision of angst, groaning under the overbearing emotional input, but despite the work's obvious misplaced intentions it is an expressive piece of broad painting, making excellent use of clashing, glowing reds and large areas of black.⁷⁰

It would be tempting to see Gogol's predicament as representative of Repin's own declining ability and bouts of self-doubt, but the mood of these works is not reflected elsewhere, indeed another series of literary canvases, depicting Alexander Pushkin, is quite the reverse. Repin illustrated a number of Pushkin's works, including *The Stone Guest* and *Eugene Onegin* during the 1880s, and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and *Boris Gudonov* in the 1890s.⁷¹ Between 1885-1896 he worked intermittently on an oil work, *Don Juan and Doña Ana* (The All-Union Pushkin Museum, Leningrad), and in 1887 he collaborated with the seventy year old seascape master, Ivan Aivazovsky, to produce *Alexander Pushkin on the Shore of the Black Sea* (The All-Union Pushkin Museum, Leningrad), a wild and romantic work in the mould of Caspar David Friedrich, showing the wind-swept poet at the tempestuous

water's edge.⁷²

The Duel of Onegin and Lensky (The All-Union Pushkin Museum, Leningrad, 1901), another work in oils, kept the Pushkin theme alive until, from about 1910 onwards, Repin worked on at least four canvases connected with the writer: *Pushkin on the Banks of the Neva* (Repin Museum, Penaty, 1910), *Alexander Pushkin on the Lyceum Speech-day, 8 January 1816*, (1911, Ill. 110), a portrait of the writer, (Národní Galerie, Prague, 1912), and *The Epoch of Pushkin* (1916). The latter two were straight-forward portraits which were completed to a sketchy finish occasioning little mention,⁷³ but the first two, and especially *Pushkin on the Banks of the Neva*, proved more time-consuming.

Alexander Pushkin on the Lyceum Speech-day was commissioned by the Pushkin Lyceum Society in January 1910 and was completed nearly two years later, in late 1911. Repin was at first delighted with the task which, he confessed, had filled him with fresh vigour, but within the year he began work on another version. It was surprisingly well received, possibly due to the increasingly anarchic artistic climate, though not universally, and the literary historian and editor of Pushkin's collected works, P.O. Morozov, took Repin to task over historical inaccuracies.⁷⁴

The painting is a large and seemingly half finished work which makes much out of very little. The young, fifteen year old Pushkin, is seen in the centre of the canvas declaiming some of his verses with a grand gesture of the arm, attended by an astonished audience whose faces register their disbelieving approval of the boy's genius. The central figure amongst the seated judges, Derzhavin, rises from his chair with a crude, wide-eyed look of amazement whilst to his right, a clerical figure, identified by Repin as the Metropolitan Filaret, stares out at the viewer with a look of mild imbecility. In defending the work against Morozov's accusations, Repin claimed that the countenance of the Metropolitan was expressive of his spirituality, which seems hard to credit, and he made ambitious claims for the figure of Pushkin:

"The face and entire figure of the boy Pushkin in my painting represent my joy of life. Never have I so successfully captured a face so alive, strong and with such an undoubted likeness as that of this *child-hero*."⁷⁵

The picture clearly does not bear out Repin's pretensions, but if one accepts his claim that the work was to have been more than a piece of literary illustration, it is another example of an attempt to capture abstract, emotional qualities, as with *Wide World*, through an essentially physical style, in this instance attempted merely by over-emphasis of gesture and facial expression. The complexity of architectural drawing and displacement of over fifty characters is expertly achieved, but the overriding theatricality of expressions and gestures hark back to Repin's earliest academic works and the influence of Bruni.

Pushkin on the Banks of the Neva was begun in 1910, before *Pushkin at the Lyceum Speech-day*, but occupied the artist at least until 1919, and possibly well beyond that.⁷⁶ Despite Repin's ambition to encapsulate the creative spirit of the poet the painting represents nothing more than a portrait of Pushkin posed against a Neva setting, and his dissatisfaction with the work led to prolonged re-painting over many years, during which the pose, height and expression were completely altered.⁷⁷ Repin continued to suffer pain throughout this period as he tried once more to paint with his right hand before eventually admitting defeat. In 1917 he told the writer Leonid Andreyev that he had renewed work on the canvas, his "Port Arthur", and had not despaired of mastering the image, despite having worked on it for over twenty years now.⁷⁸

In some respects this undoubtedly improved the canvas since, by comparison with the staid and gentlemanly pose of the work as it appears today, a version seen in a photograph of 1914 shows Pushkin with a comical expression, making an expansive gesture of the arms.⁷⁹

The painting, like *The Morning of the Resurrection*, is thickly impasted with dry paint, applied with little outlining, just the colours delineating form. A small but pleasing touch is a scintillating patch of crimson sunlight which illuminates Pushkin's right shoulder with a brilliance reminiscent of Kuindzhi at his most dazzling, but the work itself is frozen and clumsy, and in parts so over-painted that the pigment is raised up, as Repin himself described it, into bas-relief.⁸⁰ One is at a loss to understand just how Repin

believed he could capture the creative essence of a long dead poet merely by portraying a solitary standing figure, and the poor result, as had transpired with the posthumous cold collation of *The Slavonic Composers*, was surely inevitable.

Themes connected with Repin's native Chuguyev were also an abiding preoccupation during the last decades, which included several re-workings of *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest* and a return to the Cossack theme with which he had earlier scored one of his greatest popular triumphs. *Gaidamak (Ukrainian Cossack)* (1902, Ill. 111), which was painted at the same time as the *State Council*, depicts a wily old walrus-moustached Cossack seated in bright sunlight, against a backdrop of open sea and sky. It is a pleasant, good natured and unpretentious work, but already shows signs of continual re-painting, which destroys the overall harmony. By comparison with the professional ease and artistic surety of the portrait of Nadya, *In the Sunlight*, painted only two years previously, it seems clear that the illness which began to affect the artist's hand at this time occasioned an immediate and discernible decline in the quality of his work. He was at this time only 58, and one must conclude that the practical problems of working left-handed contributed greatly to the frequent re-painting of works, since the degenerative effects of old age, discernible in later works, could hardly have played a part in the faltering execution of *Gaidamak*.

Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast (1908-1909, Ill. 112) was begun in October-November 1907 whilst Repin was in Chuguyev, only a month after resigning from the Academy, and during the same months in which he began writing his childhood memoirs. It seems not unreasonable then to view the work as both a release from the formality and constraint of the capital and a return to the earthy, unsophisticated sincerity of his native land and uncomplicated Ukrainian forbears. It was shown at the 37th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1908 but was very poorly received. Repin initially claimed that this was because the critics were looking for the "old Repin", where he had been preoccupied with technical and artistic considerations of composition and harmony.²¹

He was forced to recant however when he saw the painting *in situ* and admitted that it was a seriously flawed and weak work. He told the

historian and ethnographer, Dmitry Yavornitsky, who had advised on various aspects of *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, that he was very upset by the outcome and would re-work the canvas as soon as the exhibition ended.⁸² Thereafter events followed a predictable course and work continued in 1909, (concurrent with re-workings of *The Manifestation on 17th October 1905* and *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*). Fully six years later he describe it as "still not finished", and he was still re-painting as late as 1919.⁸³

One of Repin's biographers, who saw the work at the Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1908, praised the freshness of colour, the powerful depiction of the tempest, and the expressiveness of the figures⁸⁴ but admitted that at the time of writing (1953), she had no idea of how it now looked. It is difficult even to be sure of what size the work is, though that it was an exceptionally large canvas can be seen in a photograph of Repin in his studio in 1906.⁸⁵ It was possibly exhibited in New York in 1921, along with studies, under the title *The Black Sea Pirates*,⁸⁶ recorded as measuring 141 x 101 inches. The composition and figures are, however, very dissimilar to the work illustrated here: the boat has sprouted a sail and tilted sharply to the right, the figures are considerably rearranged and facially changed, and the bottom right of the canvas is obscured by sea-spray. Both this, and the surmise (confirmed by recent auction sales in the West) that many of the works exhibited in New York remained in the United States, make it more likely that this is a variant, but a large one nevertheless, indicating serious aspirations.

The dramatic vertical composition forms the most interesting aspect of the work, producing a daring, unconventional image of the boat in a sharply downcast position, with a determined attempt to capture the spirit of the wild sea engulfing the robust, individualised Cossacks.⁸⁷ The painting and various studies which have been illustrated, are clearly of the same broad, sketchy manner which characterised Repin's work of this period, but it is unsatisfactory to judge the painting from the uniformly poor, and visually varying, black and white illustrations from which it is known.⁸⁸ It is, however, another example of late attempts to recapture the youth and vigour of previous successes, striving after the artistic surety of

touch which, as the prolonged bouts of re-painting attest, had all but deserted him. From what visual evidence we have it appears to be a brave if flawed attempt, exhibiting the same *joie de vivre* but even less by way of narrative than *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*.

What Repin lacked in technical accomplishment or originality of thought at this time is compensated for by sheer exuberance and persistence of will. His last work on the Cossack theme, indeed one of his very last paintings, *Gopak (Ukrainian Dance)* (1927, Ill. 113), exemplifies his final burst of creative energy. Pursued throughout 1926-1929, during which period he wrote his memoirs of Musorgsky, it was planned as an homage to the robust, vital, and thoroughly Russian personality of the composer: "Musorgsky was a natural, a bogatyr — he looked like a Black Sea mariner."⁸⁹ But in similar vein to *Wide World* Repin also admitted that in this and other works he also sought to rejuvenate himself through his art.⁹⁰

Gopak is a rumbustious, bacchic dance scene, conceived around an energetic, vortical composition which can also be seen in his portrait of the opera singer A.L. Shkilondz (Private Collection, 1910) and in another swirling dance scene of 1926, *Lezginka*, depicting a young Georgian girl in native costume.⁹¹ The work, however, seems most indebted to the youthful influence of Malyavin's *The Whirlwind*, which Repin had so admired over twenty years earlier.⁹² Despite its rough and unfinished nature this late paean to life, from the brush of an eighty-three year old physically ailing artist, has a real vibrancy and energy, more so perhaps than the technically superior *Zaporozhye Cossacks*, and it is fitting that Repin's last major canvas should further his life-long fascination for the Cossack peoples on an uncomplicated, joyous, non-didactic note.

A brief survey of the remainder of works which occupied Repin's years at Penaty, virtually all portraits, is in danger of degenerating into a doleful and repetitive litany of good intentions unfulfilled. *Minin's Call to Nizhni-Novgorod (The Interregnum of 1613)*, a scene from Russian history mentioned briefly in chapter 3, is an exception to the themes discussed above, but one which fared no better for long periods of re-working. Similar problems beset an enormous group

portrait, *The Finnish Celebrities* (Ateneum, Helsinki, 1922), painted to commemorate a dinner in Repin's honour, held by the Finnish Society of Artists in September 1920.⁹³ It includes portraits of Jean Sibelius, the artists Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Eero Järnfeldt, Pekka Halonen, and Ville Vallgren (who provided details as to the identity of the sitters in *A Parisian Café*), as well as Repin himself, seen standing with his back to the viewer.

It is a curious work. The colouration is bright and fresh, but the canvas divides into two halves: the left, well painted, detailed and seemingly finished, whilst the right-hand figures, including the portrait of the great Finnish statesman C.G. Mannerheim, are coarse, painted thickly and drily in an impressionistic manner. The fact that Repin had to paint from photographs would account for some stiltedness but technically it looks like the work of two artists, and the individual sitters seem totally unconnected with one another, merely positioned about the room. The Finns were not keen to accept it, even as a gift, and today it hangs in an upstairs function room of the Ateneum, unseen by the public.

By comparison individual portraits fared much better and though the style became at times extremely broad, a fine quality of likeness and depth of personality persisted. One of many good examples is that of the psychiatrist Vladimir Bekhterev (1913, Ill. 114). The stout figure of the sitter, anchored in the curved chair which echoes his solid form, is as simply and directly posed as Repin's portraits of the 1880s, that of Pisemsky for example (Ill. 75), but gone is the fine drawing and tightly controlled brushwork, instead the artist makes a virtue of the force and speed of execution, the paint applied liberally and swiftly to create a pleasing and colourful raised patina of pigment. As late as 1920, in Repin's large sketch for a portrait of the artist Gallen-Kallela (Ill. 115), whom he had earlier branded a maniac, but with whom he later enjoyed good relations,⁹⁴ a deft likeness is combined with the most expressionistic paintwork. In reproduction the portrait appears reasonably finished, a good likeness, but is in fact severely impasted and ingeniously worked. The whites of the eyes, for instance, are merely bare canvas, giving a mask-like countenance on close viewing, but creating from a distance

the desired image through the freedom but sureness of execution.

In general the quality of portraiture, though it became decidedly rougher, more overtly painterly, did not suffer the same decline and problems as the major canvases, but there were inevitable casualties. A large portrait of Shalyapin for instance, seen reclining in a flamboyant, bohemian pose, was begun in 1914 and shown at the 43rd Peredvizhnik exhibition of that year. But after disastrous repaintings through 1914-1916, complicated by attempts to amend its imperfections by working from memory, Repin was forced to abandon the project. In the end only Shalyapin's pug, 'Bulka', seen nestling in his master's lap, was left untouched. The rest was beyond salvaging and he finally wiped it away, repainting the canvas with a portrait of Natalya Nordman whilst bemoaning the loss of so much work.⁹⁵

The highlights of the last years at Penaty were few and far between. Repin's 80th birthday occasioned wide celebration and major exhibitions were held in Moscow in 1924, and in Leningrad and Prague in 1925. A flood of good wishes descended on Penaty, to which he replied publically,⁹⁶ but otherwise life at Kuokkala was enlivened only by sporadic visits from close friends or the curious, the Soviet delegation of 1926, and characterised by genteel poverty and the endless struggle to perfect one or other recalcitrant canvas. What kept Repin going to the last was his work, which on numerous occasions he identified as his *raison d'être*, more so than family, friends or even personal happiness.⁹⁷ Despite failing health, recurring doubts and creative problems, he told Chukovsky a few years before his death that he felt his efforts vindicated by the integrity of his work: "First of all I did not forsake art. All of my last thoughts are of it, and I recognise that I worked to the best of my abilities on all of my paintings."⁹⁸

Repin was even planning his own memorial and regretting that he would not have the strength to dig his own grave,⁹⁹ fully three years before, on September 29th, 1930, still working to the last, he died, as the saying goes, 'in harness'. Chukovsky, who had been a close friend throughout the latter years of his life noted the long, arduous

struggle of Repin's addiction to art but concluded, that it was life-giving rather than vitiating.

"I had barely become acquainted with him when I saw on his easel the painting *Pushkin on the Neva in 1835*, on which he had been working for several years already. And when I was with him not long before his death, during Soviet times, the very same canvas stood on the easel. For twenty years he had agonized over it, painting at least hundreds of Pushkins...and I sensed that the future held still many more years of work on that most unlucky painting...

All around him were dozens of canvases, and I knew that if, for instance, there were eight figures on one of them, there had indeed been eighty or eight times eighty. On *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast*, *The Miracle-Working Icon*, and *Pushkin at the Examination*, he had in my presence altered so many faces, perpetually varying them, that they would have been quite enough to populate a provincial town.

And when in old age, from overwork, his right hand became withered and he could not hold the brush, he immediately began to learn how to paint with the left, in order not to leave off painting for one minute. And when from the weakness of old age he could no longer hold the palette in his hand he hung it, like a weight, around his neck, with the help of a special harness, and with this weight he worked from morning till night.

It never happened that I entered the dark, crowded, low room, which was located under his studio, but I always heard the tread of his weak legs, signifying that after each stroke he was moving back to look at his canvas, because the strokes were intended to be viewed from afar and he was verifying them from a greater distance; this meant that he walked daily in front of each painting several versts until, when he was exhausted to insensibility, he gave it up.

It seems to me that he conquered not only old age, but death itself, by his passion for art."¹⁰⁰

* * * * *

CONCLUSION

Repin through Soviet and Western eyes

The invidious shaping of Repin's artistic and epistolary legacy to fit that of a committed socialist began soon, but not immediately after the artist's death. During his life-time Repin's name, along with others of the Peredvizhnik school, was excluded from a list of worthies drawn up in 1918, in connection with Lenin's plans for the propagation of a monumental art form expressing civic virtues. The list included such odd bed-fellows as Andrei Rublyov, Orest Kiprensky, Aleksandr Ivanov and Mikhail Vrubel,¹ the last of whom, it will be remembered, was consistently denied exhibition space with the Peredvizhniki. But by 1933, three years after Repin's death, the first claims were made that Lenin had approved of the artistic triumvirate of Rembrandt, Rubens and Repin.²

The importance of Repin's standing was not instantly settled as denials persisted that he could be considered a precursor of Socialist Realism, partly due to the ambiguity of his outlook (even his most successful revolutionary canvas, *They Did Not Expect Him*, offers no clear reading), but also due to a still extant desire in some circles not to strait-jacket artists into a narrowly nationalist ethic and realist aesthetic. Between 1934-1936 however, the proponents of multi-faceted art lost ground,³ and it was during these years that Repin and his work were enshrined in the Soviet pantheon.

In 1934, the year which saw the formal endorsement of Socialist Realism at the first Congress of the Writers' Union, two articles by P.M. Sysoyev, *Repin as a representative of revolutionary populism* and *Repin's revolutionary populist legacy*⁴, as their titles suggest, ousted the hitherto qualified approval of Repin's work by Marxist scholars, to establish in its place the canonisation of a socialist forerunner, a disciple of Chernyshevsky, Herzen and Bakunin, and a devout revolutionary. Ideological content and the correctness of the realist style were henceforth promoted above all else, and vituperative attacks on dissenting writers became a regular feature.

In 1936 issues four and five of *Iskusstvo*, the official organ of

the Union of Soviet Artists, whose origins go back to 1932 (though its final establishment was delayed until 1957) as a body to replace the variety of official art groups, were devoted in the majority to Repin's work, assessing him as a political progressive with a socialist mission, and attacking degenerate formalist tendencies for good measure.⁵ That same year Repin's pre-eminence was underscored by massive exhibitions in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev, at which over one thousand canvases were shown. The catalogue for these exhibitions underwent various ideological changes between 1935-1936, passing from a consideration of Repin's artistic qualities to one of a socially committed narrator.⁶ Elsewhere during this decisive period Repin was propounded as a nationalist scornful of Western art which failed to engage social issues, a view worthy of Stasov at his worst.⁷

A wide range of posthumous honours consolidated Repin's national standing. His canvases and writings were published in large numbers and the Imperial Academy was renamed the Repin Institute of Art, Sculpture and Architecture. In 1944 the Council of Ministers decreed that Repin's entire correspondence, around 10,000 letters, be published in honour of his centenary, and in 1948 Kuokkala was renamed Repino.⁸

The effects of long and unremitting misrepresentation have undoubtedly had a deleterious effect on a proper appreciation of Repin's work, but it would seem, happily, that during the period of this research attitudes show signs of relaxing. A recent writer, for instance, has alluded to the "Stasovite" mythologising of Repin's legacy, the hypnotising effects of Grabar's biography on successive writers (i.e. their non-divergence from its laudatory slant), and the need for wider, more balanced research.⁹ These are propitious signs, but the tide, if it is indeed on the turn, has as yet gathered no momentum and a critical reappraisal of Repin's art has yet to appear. Meanwhile the Soviet perspective obtains. The most recent monograph adheres to the usual democratic-social emphasis and, in relation to the cultural climate of the 1860s, which purportedly shaped Repin's outlook, the secession of 1863 is colourfully labelled as the "Riot of the Fourteen."¹⁰

The Soviet view of Repin and his contemporaries suffers not merely

from being selectively constructed, but in the main from being illogical. An ethos of social involvement can be easily shaped to strategic ends, as easily as native subject matter was and is appropriated to nationalistic ends, but the element of protest, of national conscience-bearing, and of the love of the people, which in tsarist times supposedly transcended obedience to the state, is diametrically opposed to the Soviet notion of the artist as state employee, supportive of the *status quo*, overlooking rather than highlighting contemporary injustices. The Peredvizhnik ethos as it is propounded in Soviet literature, and none more so than in Repin's case, is not one of acquiescence, but of independence, even at personal risk, of protest rather than capitulation.

Even amidst the genocidal horrors of the Stalinist labour camps Repin's name was invoked by Solzhenitsyn as the natural visual chronicler of contemporary events. "Repin is no longer with us, and this is no subject for our new artists..."¹¹ The image of a group of Gulag inmates forced to load an inhuman quota of wood onto sledges, before hauling it burlak-fashion, undoubtedly prompted the association, but Solzhenitsyn alludes here both to the common perception of Repin as a committed but independent humanitarian, as well as to the timidity and complicity of Soviet artists.

Illogical or distorted as Soviet art history can be at times, this is not surprising, since by their nature political regimes are prone to self-justification. What is perhaps more perplexing is the manner in which Western commentators have imbibed and reiterated much of this disinformation. The object of this thesis, as mentioned in the introduction, is not, like Stasov, to criticise the critics, but some mention of this issue needs to be made here since it has been as detrimental to Repin's work, and that of the Peredvizhnik school in general, as has the Soviet slant. And since Western writers feel free to criticise the manifest shortcomings of Soviet art history it is not unfair to scrutinise our own performance.

Beyond the long-standing, dismissive attitude towards content in art, which has characterised our century, and which has ill-served the work of realist and narrative painters internationally, Russian artists have had to contend with some added hindrances. Nineteenth-

century Russia was, and is, an enigma to many, raising fiercely bipartisan political, economic and cultural questions which are seldom analogous to those in Western Europe, and which, therefore, require close and prolonged study. Indeed the cultural debate centred around Russia's differences with the West, and whether to expunge or to amplify them. For the foreign reader Russian cultural history in its relationship to the West is a confusing manifestation of bombastic nationalism, simple ambivalence, or rank inferiority. These factors ensured that during the current reassessment of 19th century art, which has been on-going for more than a decade now, Russian realism was not to the fore, and in addition it might justly be argued that in reclaiming the prominence of some of Europe's leading realists, Russian artists were, in their own day, rarely regarded on an international level, such was the intensity of the interior debate.

The Peredvizhniki have long been the victims of marginalisation, since their contribution to nineteenth century art has been confined to a few outlets where its inclusion is necessary, but not always desired. The vast body of Western publications on the Russian *avant-garde* of the early twentieth century has naturally placed modernism in context with what preceded, what artists were reacting against, but by the nature of the subject has tended to be antipathetic towards the realist tradition, summarily dismissing the Peredvizhniki by aligning it with the Soviet-inspired view of a school committed to didacticism.

Within comprehensive histories of 19th century European art, which often graft European ideas onto the Russian scene, and which are over-reliant on scant English language sources, the realist school has fared no better. It is of course unreasonable to expect writers to master a fresh language for every subject briefly tackled, or to develop subtle arguments and analyses within works with a much broader scope, but in these brief summations the accuracy of each word becomes paramount, and it is not sufficient to repeat old and unsubstantiated adages which, in Repin's case, have painted the artist as manifesting an unrelenting enmity to all things foreign and a total disregard of formal concerns.

Something of both of these trends can be observed in comprehensive histories of Russian art. The breadth of the undertaking assures that

artists are dealt with briefly, usually in a simplified manner, whilst the period during which they have been written has been historically one of hostility towards narrative art.¹² In dealing therefore with movements to which the writer is unsympathetic there is a notable reliance on repeating previous, often inaccurate opinions wholesale. There is, for instance, barely a single work on Russian art which discerns between the St. Petersburg *Artel* and the Muscovite-inspired *Peredvizhniki*, to which only four *Artel* members were attracted; all but one insist instead that the *Artel* transformed itself into the *Peredvizhniki*, and usually for the same reasons as expressed in Soviet histories, as a mark of artistic and political dissension fuelled by a desire to bring art to the masses.¹³

In particular too much trust has been placed in Benois' accessible English edition of *The Russian School of Painting*, which in Repin's case, since it was written after the acrimonious split with *Mir iskusstva*, and not long after Repin had been castigating the debilitating influence of Benois and Diaghilev on Bakst, is crudely dismissive of the artist as a socially-minded narrator with no comprehension of artistic problems, an unconscious, unquestioning follower of the narrow aesthetic of his age.¹⁴ Both here and elsewhere, courtesy of his humble social background, Repin is characterised as a simple, uneducated, almost bumpkinesque figure.¹⁵

Such crude assertions, born of misrepresentations from Stasov, Benois and Soviet sources, still persist and have coalesced in the most recent assessment of Repin's complex and contradictory career: "Repin found nothing to admire in European painting". "In outlook he remained narrowly chauvinistic". "Repin was not a thinker; and his work is rarely free of a fussy insensitive vulgarity. Worse still it seems completely lacking in any kind of consideration as to the true nature of painting, its purpose or its aims". "...he was content to paint whatever he saw before him". "...he seems fundamentally shallow, even heartless. In art he was essentially conservative; emotionally he was superficial". "Exploration meant nothing to him."¹⁶

Some of these comments are, of course, a matter of opinion, but others are manifestly inaccurate. Narrow chauvinism is not an accusation which can be sustained, nor is a dismissive attitude

towards Western art. The arduous, methodical planning and research which underpinned Repin's works, arranging and rearranging setting and subjects, experimenting with different models and a variety of poses and expressions, or, in the case of *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, a decade of work which included three field trips to the Ukraine to gather geographic, ethnographic, architectural and archaeological materials, cannot reasonably be equated with painting whatever appeared before the artist's eyes, a practice, as Repin observed, more redolent of the Impressionist school, which he felt subordinated the creative imagination by its preoccupation with chance renditions from nature.¹⁷

The legacy of Benois' writings has also been the chief cause of accusations that Repin was not a thinker, or that he was politically immature. Repin was certainly inconsistent in his views, which were seldom well-defined, but he made strenuous efforts to compensate for his educational shortcomings, becoming exceptionally well-read, a man who could make subtle differentiations between Homer and Theocritus, who, even at the age of 82, was learning English in order to study theories of education,¹⁸ a man who could hold his own with Stasov and Tolstoy, both of whom attempted, with varying degrees of commitment, to make him a conductor of their very different philosophies. Testimony from revolutionary figures, both contemporaries of the artist and of the younger generation, reveal that he was exacting in getting his facts right, in evoking a mood familiar to those whose experience outstripped his own, and that in this respect he was a consistently dissatisfied perfectionist.

Repin was the first artist to be elected a member of the Russian Literary Society, in 1888, and was widely accepted as an intellectual equal in literary circles, a fact reflected in Chekhov's assessment of his standing as being surpassed only by Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky.¹⁹ It simply will not do to pass him off as a shallow thinker failing to shake free of his peasant background.

The most recent but no less lamentable expression of these hoary inaccuracies, which appears in connection with a large exhibition of Russian art in Manchester, the purpose of which is to widen the appreciation and understanding of a variety of unfamiliar schools and practitioners, introduces Repin to the British public as an artist

devoid of stylistic concerns, ideologically linked to his "mentor" Chernyshevsky, and to Lenin and the Bolsheviks.²⁰ By comparison the most recent English-language work on Russian art, written by a Soviet scholar, whilst still stressing Repin's national significance, shows a remarkable relaxation of the old ideologies, paying tribute to his observation of Western art trends in Paris, devoting more attention to the technical and painterly aspects of his works, and making relatively little of the tendentious motives usually attributed to works such as *Burlaki*, *They Did Not Expect Him* and *State Council*.²¹

It remains to be seen if this heralds a trend, and if so, whether the willingness to reassess will be matched by Western art historians whose criticisms in the past have acted as an antidote to the Soviet hagiographies, but have been generally no less one-sided, tending as they do to rest on the same fallacies, the only difference being that what one side regards as a virtue the other sees as a vice. Neither, however, has assisted a broader, more judicious appreciation of Repin's worth, or of that of the realist school in general.

Aesthetics and Ideology in Repin's life and work

Aestheticism pure and simple, art for art's sake, threatened to absorb Repin on two occasions: in Paris 1873-1876, and again during the 1890s, roughly corresponding to the period between his resignation from the Peredvizhniki in 1891 and the rapprochement with Stasov in 1899. In the first instance, in Paris, it never fully developed, though the young painter showed that he was willing to take on the combined might of Stasov and Kramskoy in defence of his right to work on subjects of his choosing, in the manner of his choosing. At this time subject-matter was a greater issue than style. Kramskoy was more perturbed by the alien content of *A Parisian Café* and with preserving what he termed the "national strain"²² in art, than he was about occasionally receptive comments concerning Impressionism. And Stasov, in his selective presentation of Repin's views on Western art, was preoccupied not with stylistic errands, but with identifying Repin as a Russian artist and forestalling any leanings towards socially divorced subject-matter.²³

In this respect too Repin asserted his independence, breaking free

of the restrictions of native, socially-engaged themes with *A Parisian Café*, the works executed in Veules, and a number of small, inconsequential, painterly views of the Parisian environs. There was, however, no consistency in his thinking or his art at this time, and contemporaneous with his castigation of the Russian disease of "corrosive analysis"²⁴ were heard plaintive pleas for a swift return to Russia, to "work in my own style and to study my native land."²⁵ Nevertheless, despite an academic training and Stasov's oppressive influence, he was remarkably receptive towards the artistic climate about him, recognising the nascent Impressionist school if not embracing it. He was generally tolerant, if not always comprehending, of developing trends, in the light of which later contradictions and ambiguities in his art and thought become less surprising.

During the 1890s a similar, though more forceful and prolonged state of affairs occurred. The intermittent recognition of art's autonomous role, propounded in Paris through a few letters to Stasov and Kramskoy, was placed on a sustained, public footing, most dramatically in the *Letters on Art*, and later with his questioning of Ge's subservience to content (and by implication Tolstoy's as well), and in his article *In Defence of the New Academy*.²⁶ But what he wrote was poorly reflected in the works, being discernible in his graphic style and his portraits but being totally indiscernible in his major productions.

The spirit of free art most successfully found outlet in his teaching methods and warm relations with young artists, though again a lack of consistency, coupled with a variable temperament, at times delighted or baffled his charges, and with few exceptions Stasov justifiably pointed to the facile nature of his followers.²⁷

Stylistically Repin consistently expressed himself, like Courbet, in a concrete language, with reference to the real, tangible, observed world. But the passive, non-committed recorder of visual data had no place in Russia, and Repin's very manner of working: observation, selection, experimentation with arrangement of composition and placement of figures, bears little resemblance to the supposedly objective, non-selective realism of the French school. Even fantasies, which were exceptionally rare, were not conceived in the manner of

Bosch, Grünewald or Redon, dredged from the subconscious and rendered in hallucinatory terms, but constructed along the same lines as his scenes from modern life, refined and honed from life sketches, and from meticulous researches into details of costume and architecture. The method of building imaginary, unobservable worlds from real, surrounding data, which is found also in Repin's history paintings, is not itself at fault, being a method used by Leonardo,²⁸ but in Repin's case results were generally matter of fact, and though Stasov was over-zealous in his denials that Repin had any imaginative ability, the artist's forte was undoubtedly the real and contemporary world, a fact as much determined by the strengths of his style as by the limitations of his imagination.

Though the pre-eminence of aestheticism never monopolised Repin's art, even during periods of avowed intention, an integral aestheticism is observable in all but the most severely insensitive of artists. Even Kharlamov, whose soft, coy maidens Repin dismissed for their fashionably sweet excesses, shows an innate concern for harmonies of colour and a delicate refinement of drawing which is appreciable despite the overt contrivance of the subject.²⁹ Throughout this thesis I have attempted to highlight the aesthetic qualities of Repin's art inherent in even the most unlikely of contenders: *Ivan the Terrible*, *They Did Not Expect Him*, *Alexander III Receives the District Headmen*, and the *State Council* for instance, as well as more obvious examples, from the early French appreciation of the effects of light and air in *Burlaki*, to the *plein-airism* of *On a Turf Seat* or *Girl with a Bunch of Flowers*, to later family and society portraits and beyond. In Repin's day however, this aspect of art, built in but not always advertised, fell victim to the fiercely sociological and ideological debate of critics eager to point-score, classify and arrogate creative talents to their own camp. Stasov and the liberals did so during the artist's maturity, the conservatives did so during the process of reforming the Academy, and even more so during the ascendancy of formalism in the arts. Attempts to break the mould were hampered by Repin's unwillingness, even within what he called trivial subjects, to discard some hint of a story, so that even the simple motif of *Wide World* could be construed as a darkly veiled portent or a call to action.

That Repin was alive to the aesthetic considerations of colour, line and composition, is attested to by the works themselves: from the delicate colour combinations and graceful forms within the horror of *Ivan the Terrible*, to the overt concern for the rendition of open air and light in *A Horse for Transporting Stones*, *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest*, *A Lively Girl*, and *In the Sunlight*, to the thoughtful, pleasing, asymmetrical deployment of figures in *They Did Not Expect Him* and the impressive but harmonious engineering of the *State Council*. The same admirable but sometimes ruinous perfectionism which characterised his attitude towards the finished image was also brought to bear on painterly concerns. These ranged from the hugely laborious *Zaporozhye Cossacks*, on which Repin recorded: "Each spot, colour and line had to express the general mood of the subject, to harmonize with and characterise each subject within the painting",³⁰ to a consideration of small but important details such as the choice of frame and finish,³¹ or the simple pleasure of sketching farmyard animals, purely for the enjoyment of their forms and colours.³²

It is debatable however whether the more conspicuous aestheticism of style concerned Repin to any marked degree. He certainly recognised it as an issue, commenting early on the original new language of Manet and the Impressionists,³³ and later turning much of his destructive energy on what he perceived as its more corrupt forms, noting then that the Impressionists had found nothing but technical freedom and had degenerated into a routine of contrived, artificial colour combinations.³⁴ The recognition of the importance of style (allied, of course, to the absence of meaningful subject matter) further guided his attacks on symbolist and futurist tendencies.

Repin's own art always manifested a free, painterly approach, a fact which reproductions of his works too often hide. Even an early academic piece like *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead* utilises both traditional correctness of forms with a rough, semi-finished paint surface, a style of working which became more evident in his mature works. Between the 1870s-1890s there is a discernible relaxing and loosening of style, relying less and less on drawing, on line, and leaning more heavily on form and colour. His style could be adapted to the subject matter, becoming rich and thickly voluptuous,

in his portrait of Natalya Golovina for instance (Ill.95), and most notably with *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*, which fully expresses the fleshiness and tangibility of animate and inanimate life, or it could be sketchy and unobtrusive, as in *The Surgeon E. Pavlov in the Operating Theatre* (Ill.99). But for ideological reasons, which will be considered shortly, Repin never strayed beyond variations of a realistic style, adhering always to verisimilitude. Even his very latest works, which take the greatest liberties with exaggeration of form and garishness of colour, remain within the parameters of the real, recognisable world, and though the term expressionistic can be used in a non-specialised sense, Repin's later style never aligns with the violent distortions of the Expressionist movement, which renounced the imitation of nature.

It is further difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between the desire for stylistic experimentation and the effects of physical decline. *Golgotha* and *The Morning of the Resurrection*, it should be remembered, were painted when Repin was 78. He was certainly looking to breathe youth and vigour into works like *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast* and *Gopak*, and admitted as much as early as 1903, in relation to *Wide World*.³⁵ As with his religious paintings these were executed with greater force and a wilder but emphatic technique, as he did with his later works, but though this was not an artistic strain consciously embraced, it is not unlikely that the style was a natural response to the subjects involved and the mood of the artist's late isolation. The private nature of these paintings, as with the works executed in Zdravnevo in the late 1890s, undoubtedly prompted a freer expression, but how far the 'expressiveness' of style was indebted to design, and how much to circumstance, remains unclear.

The strong emotional input of Repin's works also deserves some mention since, though it is not necessarily classifiable as an aesthetic attribute, it ran contrary to the correctness of Realism with a capital 'R', or the utilitarian constraints of programmatic art, being essentially an inspirational, irrational, romantic or empathetic facet. Repin occasionally claimed that the critical fascination with what the artist "thinks", how he selects and expresses his ideas, constituted a misunderstanding of the artistic

psyche, which found meaning and fulfilment in the simple enjoyment of living forms and in the physical act of painting, and he once regretted the legions of intellectuals who had never camped in the open to witness the beauty of a sunrise.³⁶

Such a contention is of course disingenuous, contradicted both by the meaningful content and intellectual aspirations of his major canvases, as well as the surfeit of emotionalism crammed into works such as *Tsarevna Sofya* and *Ivan the Terrible*, but he rightly draws attention to the unquantifiable, intuitive and non-intellectual aspect of artistic creation.

Emotionally Repin steered clear of overt idealisation and rarely descended to sentimentality. A notable exception was *The Duel*, but other promising subjects, such as *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter* and *Seeing Off a Recruit* were handled with admirable restraint. There were, however, many lapses of taste during an inconsistent career, sometimes due to the impossible, unconvincing nature of the outcome, as in *St. Nicholas of Myra*, sometimes due to an oppressive emotional content, but more memorably due to a recurrent fascination for the lurid and outré, from *The Slaughter of the Egyptian Firstborn* in 1865, to *Golgotha* in 1922. An abiding and unedifying example of Repin's occasionally aberrant taste is provided by his advice to Surikov, to include the hanged cadavers in *The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsy*, an *idée fixe* which he sought to sell with the exhortation: "String them up! String them up!"³⁷ Repin's output certainly lacked the serene refinement and consistent good taste of a painter like Serov, but what it lacked in parts it made up in others, and his penchant for the outrageous was compensated for by a fire and passion found wanting in Serov's cultivated oeuvre.

In all, overt references to aesthetic matters are far fewer in Repin's writings than are the clear, or sometimes cryptic comments, which lend themselves to an ideological interpretation, though many of these, in the process of debating contextual issues, consider also the means of artistic expression. The aesthetic, purely formal aspects of Repin's paintings nevertheless proclaim themselves integrally, and the paintings, rather than the critical outpourings of past or present commentators, or of the artist himself, are the proper sphere in which

to look for them. It is fair to be sceptical of the overriding pro-aestheticism of Repin's writings in the 1890s because it is too seldom reflected in his work, but conversely it is equitable, despite the lack of a consistently expressed engagement on formal concerns during his heyday, to look beyond the strong, distracting content, and to observe the tangible delight of line, colour and compositional formation in those works which less conspicuously advertise their aesthetic qualities.

The ambiguities and contradictions of Repin's political ideology have been discussed at length in chapter 5, from which one can deduce that he was a chronicler of the revolution, a royal portraitist, a radical socialist and member of the conservative establishment who supported the Revolution, vilified Lenin and Trotsky, and looked forward to the coming republic. Seeking a consistency of political ideology amongst Repin's vast visual and written output is a fruitless task. Even the vague epithet 'progressive', which is applicable by comparison with a conservative critic like Suvorin, and more so when contrasted to the severely reactionary outlook of Pobedonostsev, is unhelpful if Repin is placed alongside an artist like Mayakovsky. Artistic events, no less than political events, shift the ground on which we stand, and the radical artist of the 1860s became the epigone of the 1890s and beyond, without changing style or content.

In his prime, during the 1870s-1880s, both the progressive and liberal caps fitted. Though never a narrow follower of Chernyshevsky or Dobrolyubov, the ethos of social concern and social awareness strongly characterises Repin's output. Such content was, however, never fully divorced from political concerns and it is clear from press and state reactions, beginning with *Burlaki* and reaching a peak with Repin's contentious trilogy of 1883-1885, *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, *They Did Not Expect Him*, and *Ivan the Terrible*, that the public conception of the artist was that of a radical, a trouble-maker, an instigator and motivator of unhealthy sentiments, "persistently driving in one direction",³⁹ whilst in the eyes of the affluent, people of the class of the Benois family, he was an out-and-out nihilist.³⁹

Repin's contemporary themes are conceived, in the main, objectively, with human concern and political and social awareness, but except in the subjective eye of the beholder do not toe a line nor point a moral, beyond the tragedy of imposed and self-inflicted ills which claim their victims indiscriminately. Many are simply enigmatic, but this need not obscure the very real commitment which the adoption of such subject matter involved.

"The social engagement of Realism did not necessarily involve any overt statement of social aims or any outright protest against intolerable political conditions. But the mere intention 'to translate the appearances, the customs' of the time implied a significant involvement in the contemporary social situation and might thus constitute a threat to existing values and power structures as menacing as the throwing of a bomb."⁴⁰

In autocratic, censorial Russia, this attitude was even more keenly felt and the depiction of revolutionaries in an ambivalent, possibly approving, and certainly sympathetic light, or of peasants as brutalised, victimised, and long suffering, required not just commitment, but courage. Nevertheless, "The peasant is judge now"⁴¹ is too flimsy a foundation on which to build the superstructure of Repin the narodnik, any more than the advocacy of artistic 'trifles' could support Repin the aesthete. Neither is he the blinkered nationalist of Stasov's bowdlerised writings or the flagrantly distorted Soviet legacy, but his pre-eminently Russian, and undoubtedly popular pedigree cannot be doubted. As a contemporary remarked:

"Repin outside of Russia is unthinkable. Accept him or reject him, he is outside of personal evaluations, he is from the people and is popular in the real sense of the word."⁴²

A long and inhibiting influence on Repin's work was the ideological force brought to bear on his impressionable turn of mind by his mentors Stasov and Kramskoy, who from the outset sought to realise their ambitions through him. Stasov was the more ardent of the two but Kramskoy, it will be remembered, most firmly applied the brake to Repin's attempts to step outside of the national strain whilst in Paris, and even told Stasov that he looked to Repin "to strike the heaviest blows against the Academy, so that the efforts of my life will have an historical justification."⁴³

It can be imagined what a burden such expectations might be to a young artist, and though it was neither Repin's task nor intention to justify Kramskoy's existence the oppressive knowledge of the faith placed in him by others, not just by close friends, but later on by his public prominence, always frustrated and obscured the uninhibited, spontaneous side of Repin's art, which showed itself in the student sketching trips to the outskirts of St. Petersburg, during the Volga expedition, in Paris, at Abramtsevo and later at Zdravnevo. In the serious and meaningful content of his major paintings Repin made plain that a relaxed and uncommitted art was not his chief goal, but it was clearly a facet of his talent which too seldom found an outlet. Stasov's meddlings and occasional misrepresentations were, at times, a most baleful influence, and Repin retained a degree of independence only at the cost of frequent and bitter squabbles between himself and the critic, but there was little he could do beyond printed protests to counter Stasov's public fashioning of Repin as a narrow-minded nationalist.

Stasov, however, is too great a figure to be dismissed as a purely meddling influence and it should be noted in his defence that Repin owed a great debt to his tireless promotional abilities and unflagging support, a fact which he acknowledged late in life without qualification.⁴⁴ The misplacement of Stasov's efforts seems to have been in trying too hard, to the point of distortion, to press Repin into the cold, intransigent letter of the 1860s à la Chernyshevsky, Pisarev, or Dobrolyubov, when he was inclined, without goading, to adhere to its spirit. To this he pledged allegiance in his maturity, describing himself as "a man of the sixties... a backward person for whom the ideals of Gogol, Belinsky, Turgenev, Tolstoy and other idealists, are not as yet dead,"⁴⁵ during the height of the aesthetic 1890s, when he regretted the fashion for the "poetry of colours, illusion of tones, harmony of combinations" and sought a return to "realistic, healthy"⁴⁶ art, and at the end of the 1890s, following his rapprochement with Stasov, when he averred, "I am just the same as I ever was, as in my earliest youth, I love light, love truth, love goodness, and beauty as the very best gifts in our life."⁴⁷ It seems clear that art in abstract, divorced from human concerns, was never,

except in brief periods, in accord with his temperament.

Repin's artistic ideology, which once more touches upon his aesthetic outlook, was most strongly and consistently characterised by a horror of art as amusement or fashion, and an adherence, as seen in the last quotation, to an art grounded in truth. In Paris he told Kramskoy that he strove to express himself "in a manner that is clear and faithful to the truth."⁴⁸ Affirming himself as a man of the sixties he commented: "Beauty is a matter of taste; for me it is to be found in truth...With all my small strength I aspire to embody my ideas in truth."⁴⁹ And to Tretyakov he defended the unidealised content of *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* on the grounds that: "It is impossible to sacrifice details for the sake of...the harmonious truth of the whole...above everything else stands truth to life."⁵⁰

Repin's 'truth' was, of course, subjectively tinged. It never sought to be the material, disinterested truth of Courbet and the French school (the realisation of which is highly debatable), but a more generalised, at times universal truth, reflected in contemporaneity. This often superseded the literal, momentary truth, hence *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* was constructed selectively to produce a general but no less permanent truth, which though reflected in a specific place and time did not claim to be an objective record of a particular event, merely an honest statement on modern life in Russia (caricatures included) from the artist's point of view.

Stylistically, Repin is often accused by Western writers of a lack of artistic 'progress' or 'advance',⁵¹ emotive terms which, used in their modern context, are inseparable from a retrogressive attitude. It is certainly fair to point to a lack of stylistic variety, but this was to a great extent determined by the goals which artists of this generation set themselves. Repin's artistic attitude is characterised by a philosophical outlook. The search for truth, whether or not one accepts that this is a definable or obtainable end, is not always compatible with, and certainly above, the desire for originality. Hence Repin found his greatest affinity and inspiration in the art of the past masters, whose style and serious-minded ethos he widely

adopted, though he insisted that it be done not slavishly.

A large part of Repin's castigation of modern art was based not merely on what he perceived as its unintelligibility, but its dilettantism, a lack of sincerity, the treating of art as an amusement. When later he expressed regrets at having so comprehensively vilified Benois and *Mir iskusstva*⁵² it was partly because their art then looked positively traditional compared to *avant-garde* forms, but also because he discerned Benois was, despite his artistic snobbishness, sincere about his work. Similarly, though he could not endorse the output of those whom he lumped together as 'futurists', his notable change of attitude on meeting Burlyuk and Mayakovsky was due largely to his seeing at first hand that behind the flippant, cynical and outrageous exteriors were artists both passionate and serious about their work, albeit in often non-serious manifestations. To this extent Repin could observe their integrity, but his own philosophy could neither condone nor comprehend their productions, and he continued to discern between what he considered important art, the vehicle for profound, intellectual content, and superficial art, a means and end in itself, and therefore merely an amusement.⁵³

Repin's output reflects the fact that he most consistently found truth in the promulgation of a realistic style and tangible content, and it was within these parameters that his best works were accomplished. But whilst he virulently objected to various post-realist manifestations in art he would, to paraphrase Voltaire, defend utterly their right to freely express themselves. In general, outside of the burden of being an artistic statesman, Repin's attitude towards artistic pluralism was decidedly relaxed, and even at his most publically pugnacious, when seeking to 'prove' that his was the correct path, to impose his version of the truth on unwilling recipients would have been self-defeating. The necessity of free art occasioned his resignation from the *Peredvizhniki* and, when the reformed Academy failed to realise his expectations, from that institution as well, and the necessity of a flexible attitude was something which he sought to instil into his students.

Repin's advocacy of sincerity and integrity are admirable

qualities, but beyond a broadly liberal and humanitarian philosophy he never consistently defined his artistic animus. The ability to change one's mind, to be free of dogma, can be a positive strength, but perhaps one which too easily deputises for a sustained analysis of one's personal philosophy. In Repin's case the lack of well-defined, consistent views, is nevertheless the result of a thorough if inconclusive wrestling with many and varied schools of thought. Despite what now seems the conclusive nature of his style and adherence to intelligible, meaningful content, Repin's activity in a variety of genres was regarded in his own day as a mark of inconsistency, a view which contradicts the notion of a tendentious purpose in his art. Repin wrote of such criticisms which appeared in 1886, in *The Arts Journal*:

"Today he paints evangelistic subjects, tomorrow a popular scene on a current idea, then a fantastic picture from the byliny, a genre from foreign life, an ethnographic painting, then, at last, a tendentious newspaper dispatch, then a psychological study, then a liberal melodrama, and suddenly a bloody scene from Russian history, and so on. No consistency, no definite aims for his activities; everything according to chance and, naturally, superficially... Do you not think this characterisation is close to the truth? I am conveying this in my own words by the way, but this is approximately the sense. What can one do? Maybe the judges are right, but one cannot escape oneself. I love variety."⁵⁴

Though Repin had strong views on how he considered art could not be created, particularly in relation to the futurists, he had no rigid formula for how it should be created. His fascination for versatility and variety led him, even in 1903, after making his peace with Stasov, and whilst still involved with fighting off the attacks of Diaghilev and his followers, to re-affirm the autonomous role of art:

"Great art is free, aristocratic, independent of subject... try to impose a formula on Michelangelo's *Night*. No one comprehends this enigma, no one can show its usefulness. It is the free breath of a great spirit."⁵⁵

It was in this spirit that he consistently castigated, and attempted to counter, the deadening influence of a sterile Academic training, though he never doubted its technical necessity to mastering the tools of the trade.⁵⁶ This, he considered, could not be achieved

merely through learning by rote, nor by a bureaucratic combination of narrow prescriptions and proscriptions. In this respect he was, amongst his peers, certainly of a progressive and liberal turn of mind. Writing in the late 1950s, shortly before his death, Benois retrospectively modified his sharp criticisms of Repin and paid homage to this quality which, though it appeared to expose inconsistencies, was, he felt, an abiding strength.

"As for Repin, I have already mentioned the prestige of this great painter among us. I must repeat that although I met Repin in 1885, when he was painting a portrait of my sister-in-law, it was only from 1890 that I began going to his house and participating in the gathering which took place (I believe on Thursdays) at his flat in the Imperial Academy of Arts where he had been appointed Director of Studies at our Arts College. I remember the lively arguments which went on round the very long table, laden with hors-d'œuvres in a spacious but otherwise bare dining-room. V. Makovsky displayed the most fury and made the most caustic remarks; I particularly disliked him for his vulgar and avowedly Philistine views. In Repin, on the other hand, I always found a warm response to all my own enthusiasms. He not only seconded my opinions but even declared once (to the great indignation of his friends, convinced 'positivists' and 'directionists' who despised imagination and believed exclusively in realism) that he looked upon Böcklin as the greatest painter of the nineteenth century. Repin's enthusiasm for Böcklin vanished later, as did many more of his enthusiasms. These inconsistencies promoted the general opinion that Repin was unreliable, even 'false', but I liked this versatility of his. It seemed to prove that in spite of the approach of old age he had kept his freshness and sensitivity, that he was still full of life; he continued to talk and write about everyone and everything with the same impetuosity and absolute sincerity, giving vent to his enjoyment of the things which pleased him."⁵⁷

The observation that in style and content Repin's art did not significantly diversify is most pertinent, but as an accusation or a reproach, that he did not progress, did not adopt or uphold indiscriminately each new and confusing artistic fashion which made its appearance on the cultural scene, and is now regarded as of historical significance, it is no more logical than accusing the hieratic, spiritually functional art of the Icon painter of a lack of 'progress' during the reign of Peter I for failing to assimilate the trend towards secular subject matter rendered in a more naturalistic style. The lack of consistency with which Repin propounded his views

on art is not, as Benois pointed out, necessarily an ideological weakness, and is certainly preferable to Makovsky's philistinism. It is nevertheless lamentable that Repin's defence of artistic freedom, which included the freedom not to be swept away by each new school of thought, was too often conducted along inconsiderate, impetuous, intolerant, indecorous lines which, if they have obscured the more logical, more liberal ruminations of his fertile mind, only he, and in some measure the acceptedly intransigent method of Russian cultural debate, is to blame.

The problems in attempting a summary of Repin's worth, and especially of trying to categorise his contribution to Russian and Western art are manifest. Not only the paintings themselves, but his prodigious written oeuvre, confound any easy definition. Whilst the long legacy of the Soviet critique has exploited the eclecticism of Repin's views to one particular end, one could, with selective editing, put his work and character through a 180° turn. Both his artistic and written output can be regarded as that of a radical propagandist or a traditionalist, a cosmopolitan or a nationalist, a utilitarian or an adherent of artistic formalism, a didactic ideologue or an equivocator.

Repin ran the gamut of artistic genres without confining himself to any one, and within each he rivalled, if not surpassed, the major but less versatile practitioners. In the critical and public eye, however, he was then as now most consistently and closely associated with his revolutionary cycle and scenes of social inequality, both of which, latently or overtly, were perceived to carry a strain of protest. He was undoubtedly most successful, professionally and personally, within the genre of contemporary life.

The painterly, aesthetic quality of his works, though traditionally granted less attention, confounded even the harshest of detractors and was particularly appreciated by fellow artists. Even those who manifested an enmity towards the realist school helped to confirm Repin as an artist's artist, a technically brilliant, though not necessarily a great practitioner. Repin's paintings proclaim that he was innately considerate of formal, painterly questions, even in the

most seemingly didactic and narrative of works, but these aspects were too easily overshadowed by the force of content, a process assisted by the long, consistently low tone, and vigorously partisan nature, of the cultural debate. At worst Repin might be faulted for failing sufficiently to allow this aspect of his work greater prominence, but it must be emphasised one more time that Repin, any more than Rembrandt and Rubens, is not an artist who can be evaluated on the basis of even the very highest quality of reproductions, the result of which is to blend tonal harmonies and correctness of form into a superficially smooth and finished image which is at variance with the works themselves.

Until these are more readily and widely exhibited outside of the Soviet Union it is unlikely that the Western appreciation and appraisal of Repin's work will change. Indeed it is unreasonable to expect so since the view here continues to be based on incomplete visual evidence. There are, of course, Western writers who have a firsthand knowledge of, and invariably a greater regard for, Repin's painterly qualities, but these are few by comparison with those whose contact is peripheral and invariably gleaned from secondhand sources, and as a school the reputation of Russian realism remains on an unelevated plain.⁵⁸

On the occasions during which Repin's work has been seen in the West, studies and variants of his major canvases, along with generally minor portraits, have been shown. The Soviet reserve in sending what are now regarded as national treasures abroad is understandable, but this policy, if it does not change, will have to bear much of the responsibility should Repin remain a purely national phenomenon.⁵⁹

As to Repin's ideological stance, this, as I have endeavoured to show, was never systematically nor programmatically expounded. The nearest appropriation is a broadly democratic, liberal, humanitarian outlook, which shows not just in his work but in his professional life. Amongst many social schemes and philanthropic gestures along similar lines to his work at the Tenisheva studio, the proposed establishment of the free art workshops, or the donation of *He Returned* in 1883 to fund medical courses for female students, Repin also donated a version of *St. Nicholas of Myra* for the benefit of

famine victims in 1886, joined Stasov's condemnation of the anti-semitic attacks on Antokolsky in 1893, appealed to young artists in 1904, in honour of Vereshchagin, to work for peace through their art, and supported Tolstoy's stand against the death penalty in 1908, to name a few.

The most persistently recurring terms used to qualify Repin's work in Soviet literature are 'investigations' and 'enquiries', and though both are at odds with tendentious art, which presumes intent rather than investigation, they are, stripped of their scientific pretensions, most apt. Despite ambiguities, inconsistencies and occasional contradictions, Repin's output is punctuated by the need for search and exploration, on both a personal and public level. As his students willingly attested, even his contradictions were sincere to the extent that when adhering to a particular school of thought, it was because at that time, at least, it genuinely reflected his belief. But he reserved the right (often invoked) to change his mind and not to be ensnared by dogma. As he early observed, somewhat prophetically, but as it transpired, not propitiously: "May God deliver me from factional struggles! I face so many struggles with my own affairs, that is, with my art..."⁶⁰

The summation of Repin's ideology, often termed 'tendentious', 'programme' or 'purpose' painting, is wholly inadequate, simply because it assumes the artist to have had a consistency of purpose. A more fitting, philosophical term, would be 'ethical' painting. Not in the Aristotelian sense of a *modus vivendi*, a blue print for the good life, or at least a better society, (though the urge to reform was a strong undercurrent), but a searching, a testing of lines of consistency, investigations into, and a concern with, the real world, its manifestations, our reactions towards and relationship within it. Whilst the aesthetic quality of Repin's works is as yet largely undiscovered, and their quintessentially Russian content has ensured the artist's genuinely popular national prominence, if, during this age of reassessment, Repin is eventually to be accorded international status, then it is this more abstract and universal quality which is likely to prove the more abiding recommendation of his art.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Sometimes referred to as the Itinerants or Wanderers in the West.
2. A. Lebedev, *The Itinerants*, (London and Leningrad, 1982), 6.
3. Aleksandr Ivanov, one is constantly reminded, anticipated French developments in *plein air* painting by a few decades in studies for his *Christ Appearing to the People* (1837-57, Tretyakov Gallery). This fair and interesting assertion however is rarely pursued beyond superficial point-scoring against European art. M. Alpatov, *Russian Impact on Art*, (New York, 1969), 202-203 is a typical example.
4. See for instance the assertion in R. Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, (London, 1896), III:441, that Ivan Shishkin, when sent abroad, "begged" to be allowed home. (The section on Russian painting, 407-453, was written by Alexander Benois). In the case of Vasily Perov general expressions of dissatisfaction with working in the West had already been converted into part of a nationalist liturgy by 1897. See Elizabeth Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art: The State and Society*, (Ann Arbor, 1977), 55. Afterwards referred to as *Russian Realist Art*.
5. In reality 14: 13 artists and one sculptor.
6. See for instance the thorough biographical notes in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting. Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 239-244, which are extremely laconic concerning Repin's changing views on aesthetics during the 1890s, his involvement with the reformed Academy and *Mir iskusstva*, but which surrounds such 'admissions' with long quotations reasserting Repin's allegiance to the utilitarianism of the 1860s-70s.
7. B. B. Стасов, 'Наши итоги на всемирной выставке', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III:344.
8. The highly partisan opinions of Alexander Benois will be seen to re-emerge in the mouths of writers throughout this century as objective fact.
9. Letter to Repin, 28 September, 1874, *Переписка И. Н. Крамского. Переписка с художниками*, (Москва, 1954), II:313. Afterwards referred to as *Крамской. Переписка*.
10. Alan Bird, *A History of Russian Painting*, (Oxford, 1987), 141-146. Quotations at 145.
11. At the time of writing Elizabeth Valkenier of Columbia University, New York, is waiting to go to press with her book *Ilya Repin and the World of Russian Art* which, she tells me, will consider: "artists and society and the uses/misuses of that tradition after 1917".
12. The broad cultural influences which shaped and influenced Repin and his contemporaries, as well as his relationships with younger artists, forms the core of Alison Hilton's PhD thesis *The Art of Ilya Repin: Tradition and Innovation in Russian Realism*, (Columbia University, 1979). Afterwards referred to as *The Art of Ilya Repin*.

Chapter 1. Childhood and Youth: St. Petersburg 1863-1873

1. 'Как я сделался художником. Бедность. Впечатления детства', *Нива*, 1914, № 29.

Notes. Chapter 1

2. Undated letter, 1880, to A.K. Sheller-Mikhailov, *И. Н. Крамской, Письма, Статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1966), 2:46.
3. Letter to V.I. Tammela, 21 May 1926, quoted in O.A. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 6.
4. On the military settlements see J.N. Westwood, *Endurance and endeavour: Russian history 1812-1986*, (Oxford, 1988), 21-23.
5. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, (Ленинград, 1982), 70.
6. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (Москва, 1963), I:26.
7. See Репин, 'Об И.М. Бунакове' in И.А. Бродский и В.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 30-32.
8. И.Э. Грабарь, 'Чугуевские учителя Репина' in И.Э. Грабарь и И.С. Зильберштейн (Eds), *Художественное наследство. Репин*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1948), I:20. (Afterwards referred to as *Художественное наследство*).
9. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 101. On Persanov, Bunakov and the Chuguyev school of painting see Репин, 'Чугуевские живописцы', *Ibid.*, 99-107; И.Э. Грабарь, 'Чугуевские учителя Репина', *Художественное наследство*, I:17-32; В.Н. Москвинов, 'Чугуевские иконописцы', *Ibid.*, II:399-412.
10. Letter to Stasov, 8 July 1874, *И.Е. Репин и В.В. Стасов. Переписка*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1948), I:99-100. Afterwards referred to as *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*.
11. Репин, 'На церковной работе', *Далекое близкое*, 113-116.
12. See И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:31 for locations. *Golgotha*, from Schteiben's painting in St. Isaacs Cathedral, was a popular print.
13. See G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 232, for a reproduction wrongly dated to 1867.
14. Colour reproductions are in *Художественно-мемориальный музей И.Е. Репина*, (Харьков, 1988), 19 and 37 respectively.
15. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 100.
16. See respectively И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:29 and И.Э. Грабарь, 'Чугуевские учителя Репина' *Художественное наследство*, I:19.
17. Репин, *Op. cit.*, 114.
18. Quoted in O.A. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, 10.
19. Репин, *Op. cit.*, 121.
20. O.A. Лясковская, *Op. cit.*, 10.
21. Репин, *Op. cit.*, 126. On the Society for the Encouragement of Artists (after 1882 the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts) see J.E. Bowlt, 'Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century', *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, (Indiana U.P., 1983), 122-123. For the Imperial take-over of the Society see С.Н. Кондаков, 'Императорское общество поощрения художеств', in *Юбилейный справочник императорской Академии Художеств, 1764-1914*, (Ст. Петербург, 1904), 263-264.
22. See И. Аничков, *Описание картинной галлерей Тайного Советника Федора Ивановича Прянишникова*, (Ст. петербург, 1853). In his proclivity towards Russian painting Pryanishnikov predates the more famous collector Pavel Tretyakov, though on his death Pryanishnikov's collection was swallowed up by the latter's gallery.
23. Репин, *Op. cit.*, 131.
24. Репин, 'Иван Николаевич Крамской (Памяти учителя)', *Ibid.*, 148-188.

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25. Репин, 'Иван Николаевич Крамской', *Op. cit.*, 176.
26. В.Г. Белинский, *Собрание сочинений, в трех томах*, (Москва, 1948), III:789. Quoted in W.F. Woehrlin, *Chernyshevsky, The Man and the Journalist*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1971), 183.
27. Summary in 'The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality', *Selected Philosophical Essays*, (Moscow, 1953), 379. The thesis was first published in 1853 and appeared in abstract in *Современник* 1855. See E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 10-17 for a convincing argument that art students were less politicised than their university counterparts and that such writings were probably less influential amongst artists than is generally credited.
28. Reprinted in В.В. Стасов, *Собрание сочинений*, (Ст. Петербург, 1894), I:60-61.
29. В.В. Стасов, 'По поводу выставки в Академии художеств 1861г', *Ibid.*, I:55-57.
30. For a full account of the growth of autocratic influence within the Academy see E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 3-10. On the dominance of the Academy and lack of alternative training see F.S. Starr, 'Russian Art and Society, 1800-1850', *Art and Culture in Nineteenth Century Russia*, 101-103.
31. A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (New York, 1916), 123. On the history of the School see Н. Дмитриева, *Московское училище живописи, ваяния, и зодчества*, (Москва, 1951).
32. И.И. Дмитриев, 'Расшаркивающееся искусство', *Искра*, № 38, 4 Oct 1863, 521-30.
33. For Kramskoy's description of the events see his letter to M.B. Tulinov, 13 November, 1863, *И.Н. Крамской, Письма, статьи, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), I:9-11.
34. Letter to Stasov, 21 July, 1886, *Ibid.*, II:252.
35. On the *Artel* see И.Н. Пунина, *Петербургская артель художников*, (Ленинград, 1966); И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:40-49. E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 224, lists the 13 founder members of the *Artel*.
36. В.В. Стасов, 'Тормозы нового русского искусства (двадцать пять лет нашей художественной критики)', *Избранные сочинения*, II:577.
37. R. Auty and D. Obolensky, *An Introduction to Russian Art and Architecture*, (Cambridge U.P., 1980), 112; A. Bird, *A History of Russian Painting*, (Oxford, 1987), 286.
38. Репин, 'Артель', *Далекое близкое*, 174-180.
39. *Ibid.*, 176. Robert Owen (1771-1858) British socialist-utopian; Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) British historian and sociologist; Karl Vogt, (1817-1895) German philosopher and aesthetician; Jacob Molleschott (1822-1893) German physiologist and philosopher; Georg Büchner (1813-1837) German writer and political figure. To this list Repin adds Hippolyte Taine, *Ibid.*, 178.
40. И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы творческой биографии Репина. Репин на "четвергах" Артели художников (1869-1871)', *Художественное наследство*, I:112-117, shows how the *Artel* continued to play a part in Repin's burgeoning career throughout his formal training at the Academy.
41. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 138.
42. В.В. Стасов, *М.М. Антокольский. Его жизнь, творения, письма и статьи*, (Ст. Петербург, 1905), xvi-xvii.

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43. С. Эрнст, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, 18.
44. Репин, *Op. cit.*, 170.
45. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 67, an oil study currently displayed at the Museum of the Academy of Arts (Repin Institute) in Leningrad. Fine works are also in *Ilya Repin 1844-1930. Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti*, 21 May-3 September 1989, (Helsinki, 1989), 53, 54.
46. В. В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1871г', *Избранные сочинения*, I: 216.
47. On Repin's admiration see *Далекое близкое*, 151-152. Letter to Kramskoy, 17 February, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 111, sets out objections.
48. Letter to A. Prakhov, 27 May 1867, quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting. Graphic Arts*, 233. See also letter to Stasov, 3 July 1872, *Репин. Письма*, (Москва, 1969), I: 42. "Each time I pass through Moscow I go (like a Mohammedan to Mecca) to bow down before this picture, and each time it grows greater."
49. F. and S. J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State U. P., 1980), 10, identify the work as a portrait of Repin's sister Ustyia dated, not specifically, to his youth. The picture has previously been dated to 1859 as *Portrait of a Girl*, though an indistinct inscription on the reverse was deciphered as late as 1969: Г. Прибульская, 'Портрет Анюты Петровой', *Художник*, 1969, № 9, 47.
50. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 163. Repin certainly mentioned to Kramskoy his work on a painting of a small girl in January of 1864, *Ibid.*, 153.
51. Parts of the series still unlocated are reproduced in the émigré paper *Иллюстрированная Россия*, No. 47, Paris, 12 November 1938. See also Н. Свищунова, 'Рисунок из Финляндии', *Художник*, 1969, № 9, 48.
52. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 73 describes the work as "a great step forward". See also А. Н. Савинов, 'Портрет В. А. Шевцовой (1869г.)', *Художественное наследство*, II: 327-328.
53. И. Е. Репин, 'Автобиографические заметки (ответы на вопросы Сергея Эрнста, 1926г.)', *Художественное наследство*, I: 377.
54. The first edition of И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, 1937, a superior edition to that of 1963-64, illustrates portraits of O. V. Chaplygina (1867) II: 148; A. S. Fokin (1867) II: 186; and the artist S. A. Marinich (1867) II: 187. Amongst others of note see that of the painter Ivan Panov, *Ilya Repin 1844-1930. Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti*, 2. See also the intriguing unidentified portrait of a general, thought to be an early commission: И. И. Лазаревский, 'О портрете Неизвестного генерала (1868г.)', *Художественное наследство*, II: 334-336.
55. See G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting. Graphic Art*, 248.
56. *Ibid.*, 249.
57. Reproduced in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (1937), II: 149.
58. Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti, *Op. cit.*, 59.
59. И. А. Бродский и В. Н. Москвинов, *Новое о Репине*, between 24-25.
60. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (1937), II: 150. I am grateful to the owner, Mr Magnus Mansson, for the opportunity of seeing this work. Repin re-used the composition when illustrating Lermontov's work in the 1890s. А. Парамонов, *Иллюстрации И. Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 53.
61. See Репин, 'Казнь Каракозова', *Далекое близкое*, 197-208. See also И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Неизвестные репинские рисунки периода

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пребывания в академии художеств (1866-1869г.)', *Художественное наследство*, I: 97-99. The Ateneum in Helsinki has an undated sketch of the execution. It was acquired in 1980 but serious doubt has since been cast on its authenticity. It is probably the work of Murashko.

62. О. А. Ляскова, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 14.

63. See for instance *Young Girl in a Festive Costume* (1867) in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (1937), II: 145.

64. Letter to A. V. Prakhov, 6 July, 1868, *Художественное наследство*, II: 27-28.

65. Репин, 'Бурлаки на Волге (1868-1870)', *Далекое близкое*, 216-294.

66. *Ibid.*, 233-234, 241-245.

67. О. Ляскова и Ф. Мальцева, 'Альбом И. Е. Репина и Ф. А. Васильева в Государственной Третьяковской галерее', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Москва, 1956), I: 249.

68. В. В. Стасов, 'Картина Репина *Бурлаки на Волге*', *Избранные сочинения*, I: 239-241. First published in С.-Петербургские ведомости, 18 March, 1873.

69. For Repin on Stasov see 'Стасов, Антокольский, Семирадский', *Далекое близкое*, 189-196; 'Из воспоминаний о В. В. Стасове', *Ibid.*, 295-310.

70. Three others active were V. A. Kokorev (1817-1889), K. T. Soldatenkov (1818-1901) and G. I. Khlyudov (1821-1885) whose collections however were on a far smaller scale than Tretyakov's. Of these three Repin appears only to have been aware of Soldatenkov: *Далекое близкое*, 160.

71. For Repin's correspondence with Tretyakov see *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946).

72. Russian and Soviet literature on the Peredvizhniki is vast and continues to grow. Of particular use as a source reference are the two volumes of documents and letters, minutes of meetings, and chronological catalogues of twenty five exhibitions, edited by B. B. Андреев, М. В. Астафьева, С. Н. Гольдштейн, and Н. Л. Приймак, *Товарищество Передвижных Художественных Выставок 1869-1899*, (Москва, 1987), afterwards referred to as *Товарищество Передвижных Художественных Выставок. Художник*, № 12, 1971, devoted to the one-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Peredvizhniki, includes much valuable information. In English Elizabeth Valkenier's *Russian Realist Art* is the only comprehensive account of the movement; see 37-43 on the Peredvizhnik formation.

73. В. В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1871 года', *Избранные сочинения*, I: 205-216.

74. Draft statutes and covering letter to the Artel in *Товарищество Передвижных Художественных Выставок*, I: 51-53. The desire to circulate their art more widely was a natural one for a society seeking to be more democratic, but must in part have been influenced by the Artel's successful exhibition at the Nizhni Novgorod fair of 1865: see И. Н. Шувалова, *Мясоедов*, (Ленинград, 1971), 37.

75. The diffident reply from the Artel is reproduced in Н. П. Собко, 'В. Г. Перов, его жизнь и произведения', *Вестник изящных искусств*,

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1883, I: 167-168. For Myasoyedov's views see letters to Kramskoy of 2 February and 21 September 1870, *Товарищество Передвижных Художественных Выставок*, I: 53-55. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 164 suggests that the *Artel* took up the proposals sympathetically and that the two camps "united".

76. Recorded in a letter to Stasov, 1 October, 1882, *И.Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, II: 78-81.

77. For a full account of the Academy's harassment see E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 41-43. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 164, says that the Academy placed the halls at the disposal of the "enemy exhibitions" because they were confused and considered it safer to keep the enemy under supervision than at a distance. Needless to say, this stretches the imagination.

78. The Statutes are reproduced in full in *Товарищество Передвижных Художественных Выставок*, I: 57-59.

79. Kramskoy, letter to Stasov, 21 July, 1886, *И.Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, II: 252 recalled that as early as 1863, he had wanted simply "freedom from Academic guardianship", and it was in this spirit that the statutes of 1869 were drafted. Contrast this with A. Lebedev, *The Itinerants*, (London-Leningrad), 5, that the formation of the *Peredvizhniki* was "calculated to express the total rejection by progressive Russian artists of the barbaric order of things in tsarist Russia..."

80. See for instance И.А. Бродский и В.Н. Москвинов, *Новое о Репине*, 15, Repin's appeal to the Academy's Council of 21 October 1865 over financial hardships which were eventually alleviated when his sketch for *The Slaughter of the Egyptian Firstborn* was awarded a silver medal in 1869, conferring the rank of 'artist' upon him and releasing him from obligations of taxation. See also И.Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 64 on the social restrictions of the severe caste system.

81. Letter to Stasov, 29 September, 1873, *И.Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, I: 202.

82. В.И. Порудоминский, *Николай Ге*, (Москва, 1970), 104. Quoted in Alison Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin: Tradition and Innovation in Russian Realism*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 29.

83. *Товарищество Передвижных Художественных Выставок*, I: 51.

84. Portrayed are the Russian composers Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), Vladimir Odoyevsky (1804-1869), Mily Balakirev (1836-1910), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), Aleksandr Dargomyzhsky (1813-1869), Aleksandr Serov (1820-1871), Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894), Nikolai Rubinstein (1835-1881), Edward Napravnik (1839-1916), Ivan Laskovsky (1799-1855), Dmitry Bortnyansky (1751-1825), Pyotr Turchaninov (1799-1856), Alexei Lvov (1793-1870), Alexei Verstovsky (1799-1862), Aleksandr Varlamov (1801-1848); the Polish composers Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872), Frédéric François Chopin (1810-1849), Michał Kleofas Ogiński (1765-1833), Karl Lipiński (1790-1861); the Czech composers Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884), Karel Bendl (1838-1897), Emmanuil Horák (1800-1871). See Г.О. Бернандт, 'Картина Славянские композиторы И. Репина', *Советская музыка*, 1950, № 11, 89-90.

85. On Repin and music see Г.А. Тюменева, 'Музыка в жизни Репина', *Художественное наследство*, I: 544-579.

86. I am indebted to Mr Richard Beattie Davis for providing me with

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a copy of his original score.

87. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 349-355.

88. *Ibid.*, 355. A frontispiece to Serov's *Dance of the Zaporozhtsy* (*Пляска Запорожцев*) of 1867 is illustrated in a remarkably similar style to that of Musorgsky's *Детская* but is unsigned.

89. Letter to Stasov, 27 May, 1872, И. Репин. *Избранные письма, в двух томах, 1867-1930*, (Москва, 1969), I: 32, 35. Afterwards referred to as Репин. *Письма*.

90. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 312.

91. *Ibid.*, I: 312-313.

92. В. В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства', *Избранные сочинения*, II: 440, 472.

93. Letter to Stasov, 15 March, 1872, *Переписка И. С. Тургенева, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1986), II: 318.

94. Letter to Stasov 14 June, 1872, *Ibid.*, II: 320.

95. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 213.

96. Letter to Iseev, 25 March, 1876, Бродский и Москвинов, *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 85.

97. Репин, *Op. cit.*, 213.

Chapter 2. Foreign travels and reactions to Western Art.

1. W. F. Woehrlin, *Chernyshevsky, The Man and the Journalist*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1971), 178.

2. The confusing, often irrelevant nomenclature is pointed up by E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 55-56. By advocating social renovation and identifying with the liberal intelligentsia, the artists of the 1860s were akin to the pro-Western would-be enlighteners. In the case of painters, however, native subject matter was too easily convertible to insular nationalism.

3. G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1975, 3rd edition), 375. The *Salon des Refusés* was established in 1863 by Napoleon III as a venue for those rejected by the official *Salon*. The scandal caused by Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* ensured that the experiment was not repeated. Artists were not alone in their ignorance of French trends. Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*, (Harmondsworth, 1987), 230, notes that in Paris in 1857 Tolstoy was oblivious to another major scandal, the trial following publication of *Madame Bovary*.

4. В. А. Прытков, *Любимые русские художники*, (Москва, 1963), 54.

5. Shishkin was in Germany and Switzerland 1863-1865.

6. М. Антокольский, 'Заметки об искусстве', *Вестник Европы*, Vol. 32, № 2, (February, 1897), 525-26. As with Repin, Antokolsky writes with hindsight, though the interest for such dramatic and exotic canvases certainly existed. His enthusiasm did not however stop Antokolsky pursuing a life-long concern for Russian subject matter.

7. In 1866 Kramskoy lavished praise upon Proudhon's *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale* but made no attempt to further acquaint himself with the works of Courbet. Letter to S. N. Kramskaya, 9 July, 1866, И. Н. Крамской. *Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), I: 59. As will be seen, Kramskoy admitted a total ignorance of the Impressionists whilst in France at the same time as Repin.

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8. Г. Ю. Стернин, *Русская художественная культура второй половины XIX-начала XX века*, (Москва, 1984), 85.
9. G. K. Loukomski, *History of Modern Russian Painting*, (London, 1945), 21.
10. Letter to Iseev, 15 September, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:76-79.
11. Letter to Stasov, 4 June, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:66. Compare this with Polenov's description of Rome as "somehow dying, it has outlived its time", letter to Repin, 15 February, 1873, *Василий Дмитриевич Поленов. Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), 25.
12. Letter to Stasov, 4 June, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:67.
13. In Rome Repin also met the railway magnate Savva Mamontov, who later invited him to participate in what became the celebrated Abramtsevo circle of artists, at Mamontov's country estate outside of Moscow.
14. Mariano Fortuny y Carbo (1838-74), José Villegas (1848-1922), Domenico Morelli (1826-1901).
15. Letter to Iseev, 15 September, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:77; to Stasov, 16 September, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:80; to Kramskoy, 26 September, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:84.
16. Letter to Stasov, 15 October, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:85-87.
17. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 November, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:87-89.
18. F and S.J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 34, suggest that Repin's concerns for accommodation and income would account for his apparent lack of political awareness, most notably of the recent formation of the Paris Commune. He did, however, acquaint himself with recent political history, though it is fair to say that artistic concerns overrode these. See letters to Kramskoy, 16 December, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:98, and to Stasov, 18 February, 1876, *Ibid.*, I:172-173.
19. Letter to Stasov, 27 November, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:92.
20. Letter to Iseev, 27 November, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:90.
21. С. Эрнст, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, 134.
22. *Ibid.*, 135.
23. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 November, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:87-89.
24. Letter to Repin, 15 November, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:263-67.
25. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:315, n.5.
26. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 December, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:268.
27. Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*, (Harmondsworth, 1987), 228.
28. Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, (Harmondsworth, 1985), 54.
29. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 December, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:268.
30. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:132.
31. Letter to Kramskoy, 31 March, 1874, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:304.
32. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 November, 1873, *Ibid.*, II:262.
33. Letter to Kramskoy, 31 March, 1874, *Ibid.*, II:305. Writing on 19 February, 1874, Repin called Kharlamov "our Russian Bonnat!" *Ibid.*, II:294.
34. Frederick Bridgeman (1847-1928) was a genre painter and landscapist, a pupil of Gérôme. He worked in Algiers for a long time,

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eventually living permanently in France. Charles Sprague Pearce (1851-1914) was a pupil of Léon Bonnat and also lived permanently in France. Pantaleon Szyndler (1846-1903) studied in Munich, Paris, Rome, afterwards settling in Warsaw. Zeitner remains obscure. He is mentioned in a letter to Stasov of 7 June 1875, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 115-116, but И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 135, n. 24, says nothing is known of him.

35. И. Э. Грабарь, *Ibid.*, I: 135.

36. Letter to Stasov, 8 January, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 105.

37. Letter to Stasov, 4 March, 1874, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 88-89.

38. At least twenty studies for the painting are known to have been done, although until recently only four were thought to have survived. Twelve studies were exhibited at the Repin-Shishkin exhibition in 1891 at the Academy: В. В. Чуйко, 'Художественные выставки г. г. Репина и Шишкина', *Наблюдатель*, 1892, (февраль), № 2, 52-63. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы творческой биографии Репина. III. Репин в Париже (Новонайденные работы 1873-1876 гг.)' *Художественное наследство*, I: 152, (afterwards referred to as 'Новые страницы') lists two in the Russian Museum and two in the collection of M. Mansson, the owner of the finished painting. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 317, n. 65, adds three more studies to the list, in the Tretyakov Gallery and Viktor Vasnetsov Museum in Moscow, and the Brodsky Collection in Leningrad. During the course of this research a fifth appeared at Christie's London sale of 6 October 1988, lot 438.

39. Letter to Stasov, 4 March, 1874, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 88-89. In a letter of this period Polenov described Repin as "a little nervous and unhealthy" but provided the mitigation that "up until the last two years [his life] has not been easy". Letter to M. Polenova, 17 February, 1874, *Василий Дмитриевич Поленов. Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), 44.

40. Letter to Stasov, 28 April, 1874, quoted in G. Sternin, *Илья Репин. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 235.

41. Letter to Tretyakov, 3 April, 1874, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 26.

42. Letter to Stasov, 5 February, 1875, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 109.

43. Letters to Kramskoy, 22 May and 1 June, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 331-33, 338. Repin was astounded that a prospective purchaser had managed to see the picture and in the first of the two letters speculated, "with binoculars perhaps?", *Ibid.*, II: 333.

44. Repin exhibited portraits of Stasov, E. E. Nekhlyudova, O. O. Poklonsky, and a work entitled *The Monk*. See *Товарищество Передвижных художественных выставок*, I: 101. Savitsky's *Repair-work on the Railway* (*Ремонтные работы на железной дороге*) was also exhibited, as a consequence of which the Academy withdrew his right to compete for the Grand Gold Medal.

45. Letter to Stasov, 14 January, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 107.

46. Letter to Repin, 30 January, 1874, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 288-291.

47. *Ibid.*, II: 290.

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48. Letter to Iseev, 24 March, 1875, И. А. Бродский и В. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 84.

49. Letter to Iseev, 27 October, 1875, *Ibid.*, 84.

50. Letter to Iseev, 3 March, 1876, *Ibid.*, 84-85. The commission was not fulfilled.

51. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:167. Grabar goes on to say: "Repin did not wish to quarrel with the Academy, especially not its all powerful Conference Secretary", a comment belied by his past behaviour.

52. I am indebted to Mr Magnus Mansson for the use of his copy of the Louvre's records.

53. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:150. See I:134 for an illustration of the figure prior to the restoration of 1936. Before work commenced Martin Mansson commissioned a Swedish artist to make a copy in oils of the original face, which is still in the Mansson collection.

54. И. Э. Грабарь, *Ibid.*, (edition of 1937), I:91.

55. See letters to Kramskoy, 10 May, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I:154; to Kramskoy, 29 August, 1875, *Ibid.*, I:165; to Stasov, 30 September, 1875, in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I:147; to A. N. Alexandrov, 16 March, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:175; and to Stasov, 12 April, 1876, *Ibid.*, I:178.

56. Letter to Iseev, no date supplied, quoted in И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:128, 130. Repin also outlined the subject to Stasov, letter of 11 December, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:96.

57. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 December, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:268.

58. F. Chizhov, letter to Polenov, 21 June, 1874, *Василий Дмитриевич Polenov. Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), 61.

59. Letter to F. Chizhov, 24 June, 1874, *В. Д. Поленов, Е. Д. Поленова. Хроника семьи художников*, (Москва, 1964), 134.

60. Quoted in J. Mayne, *Art in Paris 1845-1862. Salons and Other Exhibits Reviewed by Charles Baudelaire*, (London, 1965), 32.

61. Quoted in L. Nochlin, *Realism*, (Harmondsworth, 1982), 28.

62. Exception can be made for the works produced, with Repin, in Normandy, 1874, discussed below. Polenov's chief works in Paris were *Le Droit du Seigneur* (1874) and *The Arrest of the Huguenots* (1875).

63. This is particularly so of an oil study of five male heads, perhaps the best piece of work associated with the painting: Е. Журавлева, 'Творчество Репина', *Искусство*, 1936, № 5, 16, (erroneously dated to 1876). G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1983, 3rd edition), 383, feels that the finished painting is stylistically akin to Degas, though there is nothing in Repin's correspondence to suggest he was aware of Degas' work. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 10, says that the work was executed in the style of the then popular "psychological genre", a term associated with moments of conflict or anxiety drawn from modern life.

64. Letter to Stasov, 4 March, 1874, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I:88-89.

65. Letters to Kramskoy, 22 May and 13 July, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:331-333, 338.

66. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:152.

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67. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 October, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:143. Repin's earlier correspondence with Kramskoy, over the painting's failure at the *Salon*, makes all the more perplexing the latter's suggested ignorance of its content.

68. Letter to Repin, 20 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:341-42. Kramskoy's contention that "art is not a science" aptly finds its antithesis in Zola's view on the detached, objective nature of modern art, that: "Science is in the air, in spite of ourselves we are pushed towards the close study of objects and happenings." E.G. Holt, *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York, 1966), 385. Chernyshevsky linked art and science by their common quest to interpret the natural world, but did not claim that art was in itself a science: 'The Aesthetic Relationship of Art to Reality', *Selected Philosophical Essays*, (Moscow, 1953), 379.

69. Letter to Kramskoy, 29 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:343-46.

70. *Ibid.*, II:345.

71. В.В. Стасов, 'Илья Ефимович Репин', *Избранные сочинения*, I:262-68.

72. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 203, n.24, quotes correspondence between Repin-Kramskoy and Repin-Stasov, as well as public reaction to the pronouncements attributed to Repin. Turgenev was deeply indignant at what he took to be Repin's opinions. Letter to Stasov, 11 April, 1875, *Переписка И.С. Тургенева, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1986), II:329.

73. A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 133.

74. A. Bird, *A History of Russian Painting*, (Oxford, 1987), 142. The crowning ironies are Benois' assertion that: "Neither Stasov, nor Kramskoy could save him from his errands," *Op. cit.*, 133, and Bird's comment that Repin failed to develop as an artist despite Stasov's "well-meaning" sermons. *Op. cit.*, 145.

75. Quotes taken from introduction to *Переписка И.С. Тургенева, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1986), II:309. A full account of the Repin-Turgenev-Stasov relationship is in И.С. Зильберштейн, *Репин и Тургенев*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1945)

76. А. Крюкова, *Тургенев и музыка*, (Ленинград, 1963), 103-111.

77. Turgenev's love for Pauline Viardot, the opera singer, was a celebrated secret. Her husband, Louis, a publicist, translator and writer on art, was director of the Théâtre-Italien but relinquished the post to become her impresario. Viardot's *salons* were frequented by such cultural luminaries as Gounod, Flaubert and Hugo.

78. Turgenev's account of the trip he and Ivanov made to Albano and Frascati was published in 1861. See 'A Trip to Albano and Frascati', *Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences and autobiographical fragments*, trans D. Magarshack, (London, 1984), 157-167.

79. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 318.

80. Letter to Stasov 28 November, 1871, *Переписка И.С. Тургенева, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1986), II:316.

81. Letter to Stasov, 12 April, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:177-178.

82. There is a more than superficial likeness between Turgenev and the corpulent, flushed-faced man seated to the left of the incredulous

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Englishman in *A Parisian Café*. There is no evidence to suggest that the artist worked a subtle revenge on the writer, but the down-turn in their relationship, coupled with the facial similarity, makes it not improbable.

83. И. Е. Репин, 'Автобиографические заметки (Ответы на вопросы Сергея Эрнста, 1926 г.)', *Художественное наследство*, I:380. This assertion, made 52 years after the event, shows a heart-felt regret.

84. Letter to Stasov, 12 December, 1874, *Переписка И. С. Тургенева, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1986), II:324. Turgenev expressed his hope that Stasov would come around to his view, which was either naive optimism or barely concealed sarcasm.

85. Letter to Kramskoy, 1 June, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:339. It is difficult to assess Kharlamov's ability since his current obscurity means examples of his work are hard to find. Those which occasionally appear at auction, usually of children or coy maidens, suggest a fine colourist tending towards sentimentality. See the catalogue of Christie's London sale, 6 October 1988, lots 451, 452.

86. F. and S.J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State, U.P., 1980), 37.

87. In a letter to Stasov, 25 May, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:135, Repin disparaged Turgenev's tastes for "Diaz, Millet, Michel and others" as well as "routine, dirty" works derivative of Ruisdael.

88. Letter to Stasov, 24 April, 1876, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I:132.

89. Letter to Tretyakov, 25 April, 1874, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 27-28.

90. Other versions are by Ge (1871), Perov (Russian Museum, 1872), Kharlamov (Russian Museum, 1875), and I.P. Pokhitonov, (Tretyakov Gallery, 1882).

91. Letter to Tretyakov, 6 July, 1874, *Op. cit.*, 31-32.

92. Undated letter to Tretyakov from Paris, *Ibid.*, 34.

93. Letters to Tretyakov 18 February, 30 March 1879, *Ibid.*, 41, 42.

94. В. В. Стасов, 'Наши художественные дела', *Избранные сочинения*, III:15.

95. The version of 1879 is in the Art Museum at Sevastopol, that of 1883 remains unlocated. A drawing of Turgenev of 1884 is in the Radishchev Art Museum, Saratov.

96. Turgenev, letter to Tolstoy, 26 October, 1882, *Переписка И. С. Тургенева, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1986), II:157.

97. Letter to Stasov, 15 April, 1875, *Ibid.*, II.337.

98. Letter to V.F. Zeeler, 21 May, 1928, Archives of Russian and East European History and Culture, Columbia University, quoted in E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art: The Case of Repin', *Russian Review*, XXXVII, 1 (January), 18.

99. Letter to Kramskoy, 15 November, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:146.

100. Letter to Stasov, 21 July, 1876, *Иван Николаевич Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), I:359.

101. Letter to Stasov, 13 April, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:127. The exhibition, at the studios of Nadar, the photographer, went under the name of the 'Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs,

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graveurs', the derisive term 'Impressionists' was later coined by the journalist Leroy after the title of one of Monet's paintings.

102. Letter to Tretyakov, 23 May, 1874, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 28-30.

103. Letter to Kramskoy, 10 May, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I: 155.

104. See И. С. Зильберштейн, *Репин и Тургенев*, (Москва, 1945), 90-93.

105. Letter to Kramskoy, 29 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 345.

106. Letter to N. A. Alexandrov, 16 March, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I: 175.

107. G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1985), 383.

108. One of Repin's first remarks concerning French art was to castigate its darkness, suggesting that he was disposed towards brightening his palette before contact with impressionist works. Letter to Kramskoy, 8 November, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I: 87-89.

109. И. Э. Грабарь, 'Репин и импрессионизм', *Советское искусство*, 1940, 28 сентября, № 52.

110. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 146.

111. Letter to Kramskoy, 25 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 312.

112. See И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I: 130-131.

113. *Ibid.*, I: 131.

114. Repin was clearly pleased with this work and exhibited it at the 1875 *Salon*, along with *A Parisian Café*. In his 1891 exhibition with Shishkin, Repin showed 15 of his works from Veules (Nos 270-284 in the catalogue): И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 146. Polenov's paintings from Normandy are not quite so free nor painterly, but he experimented with similarly relaxed subjects, including a stone-transporting horse.

115. Reproductions can be found as follows: *The Outskirts of Paris. Montmartre* И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 145; *The Road to Montmartre*, Г. Чурак, И. Е. Репин из собрания государственной Третьяковской галереи, (Москва, 1987), plate 6; *Parisian Study. Boy by a Wall. Montmartre*, in *The Radishchev Art Museum, Saratov*, (Leningrad, 1985), plate 42.

116. *News-seller in Paris* reproduced in И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 127. *Conjurer on a Parisian Boulevard* in Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I: 151. Perov's similar scenes, *Festivities in a Paris Suburb*, *Vendor of Song Books* and *Merry-making in Paris* (all dated 1863-1864, Tretyakov Gallery) are reproduced in В. А. Ляшин, *Перов*, (Ленинград, 1987), plates 13, 15 and 19. On the Russian view of Paris see Е. В. Нестерова, 'Французская тема в творчестве русских жанристов (1860-1870 гг.)', *Творчество И. Е. Репина и русское искусство 2-й половины XIX-XX веков*, (Ленинград, 1987), 22-28.

117. C. Brinton, *The Ilya Repin Exhibition*, introduction to the Catalogue of Paintings at the Kingore Galleries, (New York, 1921). No pagination.

118. Letter to Stasov, 13 April, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 127.

119. A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 78.

120. T. Duret, *Manet*, (New York, 1937), 46-48.

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121. Letter to Kramskoy, 10 May, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I:154.
122. Letter to Kramskoy, 29 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:345.
123. Letter to Stasov, 14 April, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:178. The painting is better known as *Canoeers at Argenteuil*.
124. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:148.
125. Letter to Stasov, 13 October, 1875, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I:120.
126. И.Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, II:263.
127. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 251, 252, Catalogue entries 25 and 32 respectively, detail references for the current thinking.
128. A. Hilton, *Op. cit.*, 63, and F and S.J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State, U.P., 1980), 39, 41, side with the view that the portrait is that of Repin's daughter. Е. Журавлева, 'Творчество И.Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1936, № 5, 11, says that the portrait depicts Repin's wife. И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I:147-148 adds the artist's daughter Nadya (1876) to the list of single-sitting portraits.
129. Reproduced in И.С. Зильберштейн, *Ibid.*, I:121. I have been unable to locate the whereabouts of this picture. Zilbershtein says it is in a private collection in England, though П. Эттингер, 'Произведения Репина в иностранных музеях', *Искусство*, 1936, № 5, 64, says that no examples of Repin's works are to be found in Britain.
130. Letter to Stasov, 7 August, 1873, *Репин. Письма*, I:69.
131. В.В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Избранные сочинения*, II:437.
132. И.Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:148.
133. See for instance letter to Kramskoy, 8 November, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:262, written early into his stay, and letter to Stasov, 12 April, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:176.
134. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 October, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:317.
135. Letter to Kramskoy, 31 March, 1874, *Ibid.*, II:302.
136. Letter to Kramskoy, 1 June, 1875, *Ibid.*, II:339.
137. See for instance letter to Kramskoy, 10 May, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I:154, which can be added to n.136 above.
138. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 December, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:98, and to Stasov 8 January, 1874, *Ibid.*, I:105, the latter qualifying his initial disappointment at the differences between Delaroche's paintings and the engraving from which he had previously known them.
139. Letters to Stasov, 12 May, 1874, *Ibid.*, I:129 and to Tretyakov 23 May, 1874, *И.Е. Репин. Переписка с П.М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград), 29, praise Neuville as the "Number 1" artist.
140. Letter to Stasov, (from Rome) 4 June, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:65; to Iseev, 15 September, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:76; to Stasov, 27 November, 1873, *Ibid.*, I:91, 92, are amongst very many references, all positive. Polenov, letter to М.А. Polenova, 17 February, 1874, *Василий Дмитриевич Polenov. Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), 44, likens Repin to Regnault.
141. И.Е. Репин, 'Автобиографические заметки (ответы на вопросы Сергея Эрнста, 1926 г.)', *Художественное наследство*, I:379.

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142. Letter to Kramskoy, 10 May, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I:154. Repin was particularly struck by the artist's painting *The Legion*.
143. Letter to Repin, 20 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:342.
144. Letter to Kramskoy, 29 August, 1875, *Ibid.*, II:344-345.
145. Quoted in Л. Гутман, 'Из переписка В. Д. Поленова и И. Н. Крамского', *Искусство*, 1936, № 1, 85-86.
146. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 130.
147. Letter to E. F. Young, 26 August, 1875, И. А. Бродский и В. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 130.
148. Letter to Stasov, 26 March 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:176-177.
149. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I:138, and А. Н. Савинов, 'Заметки о картинах Репина: III. Негритянка', *Художественное наследство*, II:331-332, are at pains to establish both the painting's technical excellence and the artist's approval of the finished work, as well as to refute earlier suggestions in О. Спицына, 'Негритянка И. Е. Репина', *Сообщения Государственного Руусского Музея*, (Ленинград, 1941), I:20-21, and in Ц. П., 'Негритянка', *Советское искусство*, 1938, № 66, 22 мая, that Repin was either displeased with the results, or considered the work a failure.
150. Letter to Stasov, 26 May, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I:156-160.
151. *Ibid.*, I:157.
152. Letter to Iseev, 9 December, 1873, quoted in С. Эрнст, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Ленинград, 1927), 135.
153. Letter to Stasov, 8 January, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:105.
154. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 October, 1874, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:317.
155. Letter to Stasov, 5 February, 1875, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I:109.
156. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:158.
157. Letter to N. V. Chelishchev, 15 July, 1908, И. А. Бродский и В. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Op. cit.*, 122.
158. Letter to Stasov, 20 January, 1876, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I:127.
159. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:159 lists variations and locations of studies. A portrait study in oils, of a seated woman, appears in *Ilya Repin 1844-1930*, Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti, 21 May-3 Sept, 1989, (Helsinki, 1989), 10, (114-115 reproduce later variations on the Sadko theme). *Woman with a Dagger*, another preliminary study, is reproduced in *The Tula Art Museum*, (Leningrad, 1983), no pagination.
160. Letter to Stasov, 26 March, 1876, quoted in F. and S. J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State, U. P., 1980), 43.
161. Letter to Tretyakov, 6 June 1876, quoted in И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:160.
162. See В. И. Плотников, 'Картина Садко и борьба за Репина в русской художественной критике 1870-х годов', *Проблемы развития русского искусства. Тематический сборник научных трудов Института живописи, скульптуры и архитектуры имени И. Е. Репина*, Vol. 3, (Ленинград, 1972).
163. The more fantastical elements of the sea life, both vegetable and animal, are strikingly similar to J. J. Grandville's *Public and Private Life of Animals*, first published in France in 1842. Grandville however uses anthropomorphic forms to far more menacing effect. See for instance 237, 240 in the London edition of 1877.

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164. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 159.
165. В. В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись' *Избранные сочинения*, II: 440-441.
166. Letter to Stasov 27 January, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I: 171-172.
167. Letter to Repin, 18 February, 1876, *Ibid.*, I: 173.
168. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 167.
169. Reproduced with another of Repin's plates, *Персиянка*, in И. А. Бродский и В. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), between 252-253. A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 261, says Repin only ventured into the decorative arts once, but ignores this example.
170. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 160-161.
171. Letter to Stasov, 30 November, 1875, *Репин. Письма*, I: 169-170.
172. Letter to Repin, 13 January, 1876, *И. Е. Репин. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 35.
173. See letters to Stasov, 12 and 13 October, 1875, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 120, 121.
174. Letter to Stasov 8 April, 1874, И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I: 141.
175. Letter to Stasov, 20 June, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 137.
176. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 159 mentions only the work of 1876. At the time the first edition was published, 1937, it was thought that Repin's references were all to this work. The earlier portrait surfaced in 1944 in Leningrad in the possession of the descendants of V. V. Geytsyg, a clerk, and an old friend of the artist's in Chuguyev. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I: 142-143.
177. Letter to Stasov, 26 March, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I: 177.
178. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, I: 146.
179. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 159.
180. Letter to Stasov, 11 November, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I: 185.
181. These will be dealt with in the appropriate chapters relating to portraiture and contemporary themes, but of particular note are portraits of Vera Repin, *A Lively Girl* (1884) and *Autumn Bouquet* (1892), *Leo Tolstoy in the Forest* (1891), and Nadezhda Repin, *In the Sunlight* (1900).
182. On the painting's *plein air* links see О. А. Ляковская, *Пленер в русской живописи XIX века*, (Москва, 1966), 96.
183. F and S. J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State U. P., 1980), 46 identify the influence of Corot, whilst A. Hilton, *Op. cit.*, 68, more convincingly likens the painting to the works of Berthe Morisot and Claude Monet.
184. Similar compositional devices are characteristic of the work of Bastien-Lepage, though invariably the figure itself is more sharply focused.
185. E. Valkenier, 'La Tentation par Ilya Répine (1844-1930)', *Revue du Louvre*, 1981, Vol. 31, Part 2, 133.
186. Letter to Stasov, 13 May, 1876, quoted in И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 159.

Preface to Chapters 3-6

1. Letters to Stasov, 10 October, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:180-182; 20 October, 1876, *Ibid.*, 182-184. In the first letter, as if to emphasise the narrowness of Stasov's tastes, Repin accuses him of having no interest in landscape painting.
2. Letter to Kramskoy, 7 November, 1876, B.B. Стасов, *Избранные сочинения*, I:710. Quoted in E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 118.
3. Letter to Stasov, 29 March, 1877, quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 237.
4. See И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:215-216.

Chapter 3. History Painting

1. G. Ugryumov's *The First Meeting of Igor and Olga* (Tretyakov Gallery, late 18th century) eschews classical draperies and scenery for a more logical depiction of native costumery and rural dwellings, though the style and composition is quintessentially academic. See Г. Жидков, 'Заметки о русской исторической живописи', *Искусство*, 1939, № 2, 62-63, 69-70. The authorship of the painting is uncertain and could possibly be by V.K. Sazonov. *Ibid.*, 69.
2. Reproductions can be found as follows: Shvarts' *Vernal Train* and *Tsar Alexis Playing Chess*, together with Shustov's *Ivan III*, Chistyakov's *Sofya Vitovtovna*, and Flavitsky's *Princess Tarakanova*, in М.Н. Шумова, *Русская живопись середины XIX века*, (Москва, 1984), 54, 55, 50, 117 and 53 respectively. Shvarts' *Patriarch Nikon* in E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 103.
3. 'Первая русская передвижная выставка', *Отечественные записки*, 1871, № 12. Shchedrin was ardently pro-Petrine, effusively describing Peter as "filled with that luminous beauty, which only undoubtedly his fine inner peace gives a man." It seems doubtful that Ge, who relented his pro-Petrine stance, would have agreed with this reading. See Н.Ю. Зорграф, *Николай Николаевич Ге. Письма, статьи, критика, воспоминания современников*, (Москва, 1978), 96-99.
4. In 1863 Shchedrin reviewed Ge's *Last Supper* as a conflict between idealism (Christ) and self-interest (Judas), prompting society towards higher, more altruistic goals, such as social and political reform. 'Картина Ге', *Собрание сочинений, в двадцати томах*, (Москва, 1968), VI:148-177.
5. Letter to A.S. Suvorin, 21 January, 1885, И.Н. Крамской. *Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II:167.
6. See typically N. Shanina, *Victor Vasnetsov*, (Leningrad, 1979), 51-57 on *Prince Igor's Battle* and 103-110 on the *Bogatyr*s. Vasnetsov's brother, Apollinary (1856-1932), is also well known for his paintings of mediaeval Moscow.
7. Stasov gave a belatedly unfavourable review to *Prince Igor's Battle* after pointedly ignoring it at the Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1880: B.B. Стасов. *Статьи и заметки, не вошедшие в собранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1954), II:174. Myasoyedov and Yaroshenko threatened to resign from the Society if the painting was exhibited. М. Моргунов, В.М. Васнецов. *Жизнь и творчество*, (Москва, 1962), 172-173.

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8. In confirmation of Stasov's fears Alexander Benois credited Surikov with having broken the mould of the narrow-minded Peredvizhnik creed: "It was as though the door was flung open, and fresh air rushed in." A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 143.

9. В.В. Стасов, *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), 119-121. This contrasts with В.С. Кеменов, *Василий Суриков*, (Ленинград, 1978), 44, that "progressive critics lauded it."

10. See М.В. Нестеров, *Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1985), 154-159 on *The Youth of St. Sergius* and 219, 270, 277 on *The Vision of St. Dmitry*.

11. At the 18th exhibition of 1890 Myasoyedov demanded that Nesterov's *Vision of the Young Bartholomew* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1889-1890) be removed from show and that Tretyakov withdraw from its purchase: М.В. Нестеров, *Давние дни*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1959), 159. Amongst other numerous exhibits see *The Youth of St. Sergius* in 1893, and *The Labours of St. Sergius* in 1897, *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, II: 437, 516. Like Surikov, Nesterov was later welcomed by Benois and the World of Art group for his "betrayal of the old traditions". A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1964), II: 132.

12. Semiradsky's *Phryne at the Feast of Poseidon*, a virtuoso piece of painting which still hangs in the Russian Museum, is a prime example.

13. C.G.E. Bunt, *Russian Art from Scythians to Soviets*, (London, and New York, 1946), 209, and M. Chamot, *Russian Painting and Sculpture*, (Oxford, 1963), 25, are two examples of works which appraise Repin chiefly as a history painter.

14. There are a number of qualifications and exception here. Repin's painting of 1869, *Diogenes*, depicts an historically documented incident, but I have preferred to disregard this and other antique subjects which were an obligatory part of the Academic programme, since they were prescribed themes fulfilled to the requirements of well-worn schemata. Repin's religious canvases, which include documented events and scenes, the veracity of which is a matter of faith, will be treated as a separate genre. Works such as *Don Juan and Donna Anna* (1885-1896), or *The Meeting of Dante and Beatrice* (1896), despite depicting period settings, are more the province of illustration.

15. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 170.

16. Letter to Крамской, 29 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 346.

17. See И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, II: 133-135. The author publishes the first known reproduction of the painting, saying that it is in the Ateneum, Helsinki. The Ateneum however denies any knowledge of the work and a thorough search of its records (and its storerooms) has failed to shed light on its whereabouts.

18. И.С. Зильберштейн, *Ibid.*, II: 134. Letter to E.F. Young, 26 August, 1875. It is here wrongly dated 28 August: see И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 130-131.

19. Letter to Крамской, 13 February, 1878, *Репин. Письма*, I: 210-211.

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20. Letter to Stasov, 23 February, 1878, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:27. Repin wrote in similar terms to Tretyakov, 20 February, 1878, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 38.

21. Letters to Stasov, 10 October, 1876, *Репин. Письма*, I:182; to Kramskoy, 13 January, 1878, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:360.

22. Letter to Stasov, 4 April, 1878, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:29. See also letter to Stasov, 12 April, 1878, *Репин. Письма*, I:213.

23. See Н. Белоглазова, *Абрамцево*, (Москва, 1981) on these and other projects. Repin and Polenov decorated the church's iconostasis whilst Vasnetsov designed and helped to lay the mosaic flooring. According to staff at Abramtsevo, Polenov is responsible for the paintings on the iconostasis itself, and Repin for a realistic vernicle to its right. See also J.E. Bowlt, 'Two Russian Maecenases: Savva Mamontov and Princess Tenisheva', *Apollo*, December 1973, No. 48, 44-53.

24. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:205.

25. Letter to Stasov, 14 December, 1877, И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы IV. Подготовительные работы к Царевне Софье (1878-1880 гг.)', *Художественное наследство*, I:154. See also Вера Репина, 'Из детских воспоминаний дочери И. Е. Репина', *Нива*, 1914, № 29, 571.

26. Letter to Kramskoy, 13 January, 1878, *Репин. Письма*, I:208.

27. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:206.

28. Letters to Stasov, 15, 26 October, 1878, *Репин. Письма*, I:222, 223.

29. Letter to Stasov, 7 August, 1878, *Ibid.*, I:217.

30. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новы страницы', *Op cit.*, I:155-162 is particularly concerned with sketches for the figure of Sofya. A study of 1879, of Valentina Serova, is reproduced at 157. Another, of 1878, drawn from S. A. de Bove, is at 161.

31. Letter to Stasov, 23 January, 1879, И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:209.

32. Letter to Chistyakov, 24 January, *Репин. Письма*, I:224-225. The painting was duly exhibited in the 7th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1879: *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:177, 181.

33. В. В. Стасов, 'Художественные выставки 1879 года', *Избранные сочинения*, II:7-26. (Originally published in *Новое время*, 1879, 8, 14 and 15 March). Stasov is reviewing simultaneous exhibitions in St. Petersburg: the 7th Peredvizhnik, in the halls of the Academy of Sciences, where Repin's work hung, and that by the Society of Exhibitions (Общество выставок) held at the Academy of Arts.

34. *Ibid.*, 24.

35. *Ibid.*, 24.

36. *Ibid.*, 24-25.

37. *Ibid.*, 25.

38. *Ibid.*, 26.

39. Gustave Courbet, letter to a group of students, 25 December, 1861, quoted in E. G. Holt, *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York, 1966), 351.

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40. Л. Певснер, 'Репин работает над образом', *Художник*, 1962, № 8, 42, illustrates one such, an engraving after a 17th century portrait by the Dutch artist Abraham Blooteling

41. In a letter to Kramskoy, 17 February, 1879, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:385, Repin anticipated trouble with Stasov.

42. Letter to Stasov, 1 March, 1879, *Репин. Письма*, I:229. Stasov's reviews of *Tsarevna Sofya* were nothing if not detailed and he cannot have failed to note the innocent sarcasm of Repin's speculation as to why he disliked the picture: "Perhaps it was badly hung?"

43. В.В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Избранные сочинения*, II:441.

44. Letter to Repin, 14 February, 1879, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:384.

45. Letter to Repin, 29 April, 1879, *Ibid.*, II:389. Amongst artist critics Yaroshenko, who objected to the inclusion of Vasnetsov's *Prince Igor's Battle* in the Peredvizhnik exhibition of the following year, was not complimentary about the picture: Repin, letter to Polenov, 3 June, 1879, *И.Е. Репин. Письма к художникам и художественным деятелям* (Москва, 1952), 35-36. Surikov also expressed dissatisfaction with the image of Sofya. М. Волушин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Василий Суриков. Письма, воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 183-184. Н.А. 'Седьмая передвижная выставка', *Всемирная иллюстрация*, 3 март, 1879, № 21, 190-191, gave rare praise to both the aestheticism and content of the work.

46. Letter to Repin, 14 May, 1879, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:390. He also communicated his fears to Tretyakov, who, after talking with Repin, assured Kramskoy that such was not the case. Letter to Tretyakov, 26 April, 1879, *Ibid.*, I:253; Tretyakov's letter to Kramskoy, 19 May, 1879, *Ibid.*, I:255.

47. Letter to Kramskoy, 17 May, 1879, *Ibid.*, II:390-391.

48. See for instance А. Палюткина, 'Картина Репина Царевна Софья', *Илья Ефимович Репин. Сборник статей*, (Москва, 1952), 121-144.

49. On balance Repin's remarks suggest he admired Sofya's spirit, of which he wrote as late as 1908: letter to N.V. Chelishchev, И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 122. Repin propagated her image in a series of illustrations about Petrine Russia for the American *Scribner's Magazine*: Vol. XX., No. 4, August 1880, 576, and Vol. XXI, No. 2, December 1881, 218. Aside from studies connected with *Tsarevna Sofya*, Repin painted a separate watercolour of the erstwhile regent in 1880: И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы', *Op. cit.*, 165. There are few criticisms of Peter amongst his writings, the most notable being a tirade against his enslavement of Russia to a German-style bureaucracy: letter to Stasov, 18 December, 1878, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:42. However, he painted no major work on the Tsar. A watercolour of 1900 *The Entrance of Tsars Ivan and Peter into the Parade Ground of the Semyonov Play Regiment for Military Games in Moscow and the Enrolling of Young Falconers into the Regiment* (Russian Museum), one of a series for N. Kutepov's *Royal Hunting In Russia*, appears in *Ilya Repin 1844-1930. Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti*, (Helsinki, 1989), 109. See А. Парамонов, *Иллюстрации И.Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 210-211 for a full list. A study of 1903, showing Peter carving ivory (possibly in connection

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with his amateur dentistry?) is in Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, between 288-289. A short memoir by I. M. Karpinsky, *Ibid.*, 277, mentions *Peter I after the Battle of Poltava*, though he possibly confuses this with *The Great Leader: Peter I at the Battle of Poltava* (1910) for which Repin's son Yury was awarded a Gold medal at the International Exhibition in Munich: *Ibid.*, 127. The inventory of works divided amongst the family after Repin's death includes a sketch of *Peter at the Dockyard*, *Ibid.*, 345.

50. See O. A. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 76-77, and *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:263. Other works on show included Surikov's *Menshikov at Beryozov* and Yaroshenko's *Kursistka*, which was itself the focus of controversy.

51. Letter to Stasov, 2 January, 1881. Quoted in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'К истории создания картины *Арест пропагандиста*', *Художественное наследство*, II:350.

52. Letters covering the period from the assassination to the executions are taken up largely with the repercussions of Musorgsky's death, as well as with works in progress, chiefly Pisemsky's portrait: *Репин. Письма*, I:247-253. In a letter to Surikov, 3 March, 1881, Repin makes passing reference to "the event" only in relation to the unfortunate effect it might have on the public reception of Surikov's painting *The Morning of the Execution of the Streltsy*: *Ibid.*, I:247. In a letter of 8 April, 1881, he criticises Tretyakov's plan to include a portrait of the reactionary publisher M. N. Katkov in his gallery, describing him as the sort who provokes desperate opposition, resulting in "such horrifying events as that of 1st March." *Ibid.*, I:250.

53. В. Каменский, 'Среды в Пенатах', *Репин. К 100-летию со дня смерти*, (Ленинград, 1940), 14.

54. Archives of the USSR Academy of Arts, Leningrad, *fond* 25, 1, 27, 1.1. Quoted in O. A. Лясковская, 'К истории создания картины И. Е. Репина *Иван Грозный и сын его Иван 16 ноября 1581 года*', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Москва, 1956), I:196. (Lyaskovskaya quotes the old *fond* number "Penaty", A. 3. K. 4. *Op.* 54. II.).

55. 'Беседа с И. Е. Репиным', *Русское слово*, 1913, № 4, 17 января.

56. Archives of the USSR Academy of Arts, Leningrad, *fond* 25, 1, 27, 1.1., *Op. cit.*

57. O. A. Лясковская, 'К истории создания картины И. Е. Репина *Иван Грозный и сын его Иван 16 ноября 1581 года*', *Op. cit.*, I:193 illustrates the first sketch of 1882 (Russian Museum) and the first study in oils (Tretyakov Gallery), possibly of 1883.

58. This composition is actually used once in an early drawing of 1882: G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 262, 263 (Catalogue No. 138). The succeeding sketches, including the first in oils, all show the Tsar holding the murder weapon.

59. V. Garshin, *Short Stories*, (Moscow, 1982), 116. In addition to Shvarts' paintings of Ivan the Terrible, A. Hilton, *Op. cit.*, 111, n.2, cites works by Pleshanov and Litovchenko.

60. See colour reproduction in G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, plate 97 (Catalogue No. 142).

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61. For portraits of Myasoyedov and Menck (Tretyakov Gallery, 1883 and 1884) see G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), plates 96, 98 (Catalogue Nos. 139, 141). A portrait study of Garshin is reproduced in И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:273. For Repin's appreciation of Garshin at this time see especially letter to Tretyakov, 10 August, 1884, *Письма И.Е. Репина. Переписка с П.М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 90, and more generally 'В.М. Гаршин', *Далекое близкое*, 389-392, and 'Последняя встреча с Гаршиным', *Ibid.*, 471-472.

62. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:274.

63. See Г. Прибульская, *Репин в Петербурге*, (Ленинград, 1970), 165. Other historical paintings, by S.D. Miloradovich and N.V. Nevrev, were completely overshadowed by the furore created by *Ivan the Terrible: Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:288-290.

64. See R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters*, (London, 1978), II:341-347.

65. Letter to Repin, 1 April, 1885, *Ibid.*, II:380.

66. А. Давыдова, 'История и современность', *Художник*, 1969, № 8, 37.

67. А.С. Суворин, 'Картина Репина', *Новое время*, № 3218, 12 February 1885. The article was signed "Незнакомец".

68. Letter to A.S. Suvorin, 21 January, 1885, И.Н. Крамской. *Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II:167-168. Writing on 12 February to thank Suvorin for the service his article had done to the Peredvizhnik cause Kramskoy expressed further admiration for the painting beyond even this, *Ibid.*, II:172-173. Kramskoy also enthused about the painting to P.O. Kovalevsky, letter of 1 January, 1885, *Ibid.*, II:164.

69. И.Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:271-272.

70. See Tretyakov's letters to Repin, one undated (February 1885) and 10 March, 1885, *Письма И.Е. Репина. Переписка с П.М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 99, 100-101; Repin's reply, also undated (March, 1885), *Ibid.*, 101-102.

71. Tretyakov purchased the painting for 15,000 roubles in a 21,500 rouble deal for both *Ivan the Terrible* and *They Did Not Expect Him*. Repin's receipt of 3 March, 1885, *Ibid.*, 100.

72. Letter to Alexander III, 15 February, 1885, К.П. Победоносцев и его корреспонденты (Москва, 1923), I:498.

73. A comprehensive censorship law introduced in the following year ensured that potentially offensive works could be weeded out before they were seen in public, thus preempting a repeat of this embarrassment or the incident in 1881 when Yaroshenko's *At the Litovsky Fortress* occasioned the only recorded instance of police intervention, earning for the artist the distinction of ten days house arrest. See E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 208, n.35.

74. The accusation was sustained in a couple of satirical articles in *Минута*, № 43, 44, 15 and 16 February, 1885.

75. Ф.П. Ландцерт, 'По поводу картины И.Е. Репина *Иван Грозный и его сын 16.XI.1581 года*', *Вестник изящных искусств*, 1885, III:192-205.

76. В.В. Стасов, 'По поводу лекций профессора Ландцерта о картине Репин', *Новости*, 9 Мая, 1885 г., № 126.

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77. Центральный Государственный Исторический Архив СССР, ф. 776, оп. 5, 1874, д. 105. Quoted in А. Лебедев, 'Из истории общественной жизни одной картины И. Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1967, № 3, 60.

78. *Ibid.* The Grand Duke singled out previous offensive articles by A. Z. Ledakov in *St. Petersburg Vedomosti*, and another in *Svet*, both edited by V. V. Komarov. Vladimir already owned two works by Repin, *Burlaki* and *Seeing Off a Recruit*, purchased in 1873 and 1879.

79. А. Лебедев, 'Из истории общественной жизни одной картины И. Е. Репина', *Op. cit.*, 60.

80. *Ibid.*

81. R. Newmarch, *The Russian Arts*, (London, 1916), 154-155. Perhaps more appropriately than Kramskoy's Shakespearian analogy, Newmarch likens *Ivan the Terrible* to the bloody sensationalism of Euripides.

82. See В. Кемениев, В. И. Суриков. *Историческая живопись 1870-1890*, (Москва, 1987), 335.

83. See *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:177.

84. R. Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, (London, 1895-96), I:439. Information and an excellent colour plate of this fascinatingly repellent canvas can be found in R. Rosenblum, *Paintings in the Musée d'Orsay*, (New York, 1989), 180-181.

85. М. Волошин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Василий Суриков. Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 183-184. Я. А. Тепин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Ibid.*, 201, recounts the same story. See also С. Н. Гольдштейн, 'Утро стрелецкой казни', *Художник*, 1973, № 2, 15-19 on the 1970 investigations which uncovered the existence of two hanged figures on the skyline.

86. И. Э. Грабарь, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Op. cit.*, 264.

87. See for instance Н. Волков, 'Репин и современная советская живопись. К 100-летию основания ТПХВ', *Искусство*, 1971, № 5, 66, 69.

88. A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 140.

89. А. Давыдова, 'История и современность', *Художник*, 1969, № 8, 37 typifies a narrow Soviet reading of the work as a denunciation of autocracy.

90. Letter to Repin, 1 April, 1885, reproduced in R. F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters*, (London, 1978), II:380.

91. Letter to A. S. Suvorin, 21 January, 1885, *И. Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II:168.

92. Letter to Tretyakov, 10 August, 1884, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 90.

93. П. Полевой, 'Запорожцы пишущие грамоту султану', *Нива*, 1892, № 3, 64.

94. For some unknown reason Repin titled this sketch *Zaporozhye Cossacks Writing a Reply to Akhmet III*. See Н. Зорфаф, 'Картина И. Е. Репина *Запорожцы*', *Искусство*, 1959, № 11, 57. An interesting correlation appears in an ink sketch of the same year depicting an hemispherical group engaged in wild laughter, *At the Vaudeville* (Tretyakov Gallery). See Е. Журавлева, 'Творчество И. Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1936, № 5, 24.

95. See И. Э. Грабарь, 'Серов и Репин (Поездка в Запорожье)', *Ежегодник*, (Москва, 1952), 5-16. A letter to Iseev, 18 March, 1880, projects the trip: И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов, (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 87. (80-81 reproduces three oil studies of

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church banners, an icon, and an interior of a Zaporozhian church, all dated 1880).

96. See A. Морозов, 'Две работы И. Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1952, № 5, 80-81 on the checkered history of *A Hetman*. The role of Tarnovsky and Kachanovka is discussed in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Репин в Качановке', *Огонек*, 1953, № 5, 16-17, with reproductions of Cossack types, weapons, bridles, costumes and cannon, including another oil portrait of Tarnovsky in Cossack garb. Similar material is in the earlier И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденные произведения Репина', *Огонек*, 1949, № 32, 17-18. A catalogue of Tarnovsky's collection containing over 900 items was published in 1898: *Каталог украинских древностей коллекции В. В. Тарновского*.

97. Letter to Stasov, 6 November, 1880, *Репин. Письма*, I:240.

98. Reproduced in *Russia, The Land the People. Russian Painting 1850-1910*, (Washington, 1986), 83. According to П. Полевой, 'Запорожцы', *Нива*, 1892, № 3, 63, this work was not exhibited until 1885.

99. Letter to Tolstoy, 14 October, 1880, *И. Е. Репин. Письма, Переписка с Л. Н. Толстым*, в двух томах. I. *Переписка с Л. Н. Толстым и его семьей*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1949), 9.

100. Letter to Stasov, 2 January, 1881. Quoted in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'К истории создания картины *Арест пропагандиста*', *Художественное наследство*, II:350.

101. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Репин в станице Пашковской', *Огонек*, 1955, № 39, 16-17. See also the Cossack portraits of Ivan Shramko and Makar Simak (both Russian Museum, 1888): G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), plates 129, 132 (Catalogue Nos. 200, 201).

102. Yavornitsky's memoir gives a detailed account of work on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*: Д. И. Яворницкий, 'Как создавалась картина *Запорожцы. Воспоминания*', *Художественное наследство*, II:73-106. Edited with an introductory article by И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Репин в работе над *Запорожцами*', *Ibid*, II:57-72.

103. In addition to the oil sketch of 1880 a similarly titled sketch, also 1880, repainted not later than 1893, is in the Tretyakov Gallery. Another, painted in the 1880s is in the Art Museum of the Belorussian SSR, Minsk, and a variant of 1888-1896 is in the Art Museum, Kharkov. A further variant, more nearly identical with the final work, is in India: E. Rimbault Dibdin, 'The State Gallery of H. H. the Maharaja Geakwar of Baroda, G. S. C. I. Part III. - Continental Schools', *Connoisseur*, Vol. 57, No. 13, (May-August), 1920, 13.

104. Вера Репина, 'Из детских воспоминаний дочери И. Е. Репина', *Нива*, № 29, 1914, 572-573.

105. Letter to Leskov, 19 February, 1889, *И. Е. Репин. Письма к писателям и литературным деятелям*, (Москва, 1950), 42-43.

106. *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, II:389.

107. Repin later exhibited the studies in Prague in 1923: letter to P. I. Neradovsky, 5 September, 1923, *Репин. Письма*, II:346.

108. *Мнения лиц опрошенных по поводу пересмотра устава Императорской Академии художеств*, (Ст. Петербург, 1891).

109. Letter to Tretyakov, 28 October, 1891, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:422. Repin did not actually take up teaching duties with the

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Academy until September of 1894, having accepted the post in June 1892.

110. Г. Ю. Стернин, *Русская художественная культура второй половины XIX-начала XX века*, (Москва, 1984), covers this period of great cultural change.

111. В. В. Стасов, 'Вот наши ценители и судьи', *Северный вестник*, 1892, января, № 1, 84.

112. A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 140-141.

113. М. В. Добужинский, *Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1987), 127.

114. В. В. Чуйко, 'Художественные выставки гг. Репина и Шишкина', *Наблюдатель*, 1892, (февраль), № 2, 58-61.

115. See for instance A. Давыдова, *Запорожцы. Картина И. Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1962). Repin's painting is unashamedly pastiched in V. Yakovlev's *Gold Seekers Writing a Letter to the Creator of The Great Constitution* (no date), H. Rubissow, *The Art of Russia*, (New York, 1946), plate 136.

116. G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1983), 385.

117. See Rosa Newmarch, *The Russian Arts*, (London, 1916), 155: "These are not the Russian cavalry of to-day..." It is not clear whether the comment is insidious or stating the obvious. Her ecstatic review, *Ibid*, 156, suggests the latter. Newmarch was dismayed by the figure of a cossack whipping the pilgrims in *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* which she felt libelled "a body of brave men". It is unlikely she would have passed over another, even implied, criticism.

118. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 82. With the proceeds from this, and the sale of the studies, Repin purchased Zdravnevo, a 108 desyatina estate in Vitebsk province: В. Н. Москвинов, 'Репин в Здравневе', И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 385-392.

119. A study from 1880 of a bald Cossack, *Абрам Лысый*, turned up at auction in Paris in 1985. See М. А. Карпенко, 'История одного рисунка И. Е. Репина', *Творчество И. Е. Репина и русское искусство 2-й половины XIX-XX веков*, (Ленинград, 1987), 53-55.

120. Letter to E. N. Zvantseva, 27 August, 1890, *Репин. Письма*, I: 374.

121. Letter to A. Zhirkevich, 19 November, 1890, quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 239.

122. A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 154, draws parallels with Rubens.

123. В. В. Чуйко, 'Художественные выставки гг. Репина и Шишкина', *Наблюдатель*, 1892, (февраль), № 2, 60.

124. И. Е. Репин. *Письма, Переписка с Л. Н. Толстым, в двух томах. II. Материалы*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1949), 26.

125. See Е. Егорова и Г. Поликарпова, *Репин из собрания Пермской государственной галереи*, (Перм, 1970), 5-7. In a letter of 25 April, 1898, to Polenov, Repin calls the work *Choosing a Bride for the Grand Duke*: И. Е. Репин. *Письма к художникам и художественным деятелям*, (Москва, 1952), 128.

126. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 128, 232, illustrated at 97.

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127. Gaidamak (1902), *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast* (1980-1909), *Ukrainian Cossacks* (1919) and *Gopak* (1927).

128. Information contained in an unpublished memoir by the artist Eric Prehn, lent to the writer by Mrs Irina Prehn.

129. In addition to works mentioned in connection with Tsarevna Sofya see *Alexander I and Napoleon Hunting in Ettesberg near Weimar, October 6, 1808* (Russian Museum, 1907-1908) and *Nicholas I and Alexandra Fedorovna in Kreuth in the Mountains of Tyrol* (Russian Museum, 1907-1908). *Ilya Repin 1844-1930*, Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 116, 117.

130. H. A. Taine, *Philosophie de l'art* and P.-J. Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale* were published in 1865. N. S. Kurochkin's translation of Proudhon's work appeared in Russia the same year: *Искусство, его основания и общественное назначение*, (Ст. Петербург, 1865).

131. See *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated and edited J. Mayne, (London, 1964).

132. See Д. В. Сарабьянов, *Русская живопись XIX века среди европейских школ*, (Москва, 1980), 107, who lists Courbet, Menzel, Repin, Surikov and Munkacsy as "The most outstanding and consistent exponents of realism..."

133. Gustave Courbet, letter to a group of students, 25 December, 1861, reproduced in E. G. Holt, *From the Classicists to the Impressionists: Art and Architecture in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York, 1966), 353.

134. В. В. Стасов, 'Художественные выставки 1879 года', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II: 25.

135. Letter to Stasov, 20 March, 1880, *Репин. Письма*, I: 234.

136. Letter to Suvorin 21 January, 1885, *И. Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II: 167.

137. В. В. Стасов, 'Художественные выставки 1879 года', *Op. cit.*, II: 24.

Chapter 4. Modern History Painting – Contemporary Themes

1. Gustave Courbet, letter to a group of students, 25 December, 1861, *Op. cit.*, 351-352.

2. *Ibid.*, 352.

3. The interreaction of art and politics during this period is fully discussed in T. J. Clark's two books, *The Absolute Bourgeois. Art and Politics in France 1848-1851* and *The Image of the People. Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, (both London, 1973).

4. Letter of July 1885, in G. Pollock, *Millet*, (Oxford, 1977), 11.

5. E. Valkenier, 'The Peredvizhniki and the Spirit of the 1860s', *Russian Review*, 1975, Vol. 34, Part 3, July, 254, suggests that the usual translation of 'denunciatory' or 'of public condemnation' fails to express the benevolent aspect and is better translated as 'moral indignation'.

6. И. Дмитриев, 'Расшаркивающееся искусство', *Искра*, № 38 (4 октября, 1863), 521-530.

7. Н. А. Добролюбов, 'Русская сатира в век Екатерины', (1859), *Собранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1962), Vol. II.

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8. Д. Писарев, 'Разрушение эстетики', (1865), reproduced in *Критическая литература о произведениях Н. Г. Чернишевского*, (Москва, 1908), 26-53.

9. L. Nochlin, *Realism*, (Harmondsworth, 1982), 113, states that the French population was two-thirds rural in 1871. J. N. Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour. Russian History 1812-1986*, (Oxford, 1988), Table 6, records that as late as 1897, 70% of the Russian population were rural peasants and 7% urban peasants.

10. N. G. Chernyshevsky, 'The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality', *Selected Philosophical Essays*, (Moscow, 1953), 375.

11. Illustrations and information on each can be found in В. Перов. *Выставка произведений к 150-летию со дня рождения. Каталог*, (Москва, 1988) as follows: *Next in Line at the Pool*, 23, 80-81; *The Last Journey*, 79-80, 84-85; *Last Tavern at the City Gates*, 39, 87.

12. *Ibid.*, 43, 87, 94.

13. See *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I: 60-61, 65.

14. See for instance Maksimov's dismissal of "pretty words about the 'people' made over a glass of beer in noisy company." E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 87.

15. В. В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II: 391-474. Originally published in *Вестник Европы*, November-December 1882; February, June and October 1883.

16. Gustave Courbet, letter to Champfleury, January 1855 in E. G. Holt, *Op. cit.*, 350.

17. Репин, 'Бурлаки на Волге', *Далекое близкое*, 234-235. This account, written in 1922, when the artist was 78, supplements the meagre references in letters of the time. Whilst it is fair to assume a degree of retrospective embroidery, Repin, quite naturally, was responding to great public interest concerning its genesis.

18. *Ibid.*, 234.

19. A good selection of these is in Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 217-232.

20. *Ibid.*, 219 for an illustration.

21. See *Ilya Repin 1844-1930*, catalogue of exhibition at the Ateneum, Helsinki, 7 November - 14 December 1980, 27.

22. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 237.

23. See А. Иванов, 'Два варианта картины И. Репина *Шторм на Волге*', *Материалы по русскому искусству*, (Ленинград, 1929), I: 255-256.

24. В. В. Стасов, 'Илья Ефимович Репин', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I: 265.

25. Г. Ю. Стернин, 'Картина Репина *Бурлаки на Волге*', *Илья Ефимович Репин. Сборник статей*, (Москва, 1952), 90-120, records the second trip as 1871, though this is at odds with Repin's own account: see letter to P. V. Alabin, 26 January, 1895, *Репин. Письма*, II: 94.

26. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 99, 101.

27. See В. Толстая, *Бурлаки идущие вброд*, картина И. Е. Репина, (Москва, 1949).

28. Variants and changes connected with *Burlaki* are dealt with in А. Н. Савинов, 'Заметки о картинах Репина. II: О переработке *Бурлаки на Волге*', *Художественное наследство*, II: 328-331.

29. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 284.

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30. *Ibid.*, 285. On Kanin generally see 283-287; А. Давыдова, 'Так создавался образ Канина', *Художник*, 1962, № 10, 49-53.
31. В.В. Стасов, 'Картина Репин *Бурлаки на Волге*', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I:239-241. First published in *С.-Петербургские ведомости*, 18 марта, 1873, № 76.
32. *Ibid.*, 240.
33. В.В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Op. cit.*, II:438.
34. Letter to Stasov, 13 July, 1872, М.П. Мусоргский. *Письма и документы*, (Москва, 1932), 223.
35. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 318.
36. Letter to F.A. Vasilyev, 27 January, 1873, И.Н. Крамской. *Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), I:153.
37. Letter to V.D. Polenov, 23 March, 1875, *Ibid.*, I:294.
38. В.В. Стасов, 'Новая картина Семирадского *Грешница*', *С.-Петербургские ведомости*, 1873, 6 апреля.
39. В.В. Стасов, *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I:701.
40. 'Apropos of the Exhibition', F.M. Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, (New York, 1954), I:81.
41. *Ibid.*
42. В.В. Стасов, 'Наши итоги на всемирной выставке', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I:344. See also 'Немецкие критики о русском художестве на венской выставке', *Ibid.*, I:244-245.
43. Originally published in *La France*. Quoted in В.В. Стасов, 'Наши итоги на всемирной выставке', *Op. cit.*, I:343-344.
44. Originally published in *Indépendance Belge*, *Ibid.*, I:344.
45. F. Dostoyevsky, 'Apropos of the Exhibition', *Op. cit.*, I:81.
46. В.В. Стасов, *Op. cit.*, I:344.
47. В.В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Op. cit.*, II:438.
48. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 263.
49. F. Dostoyevsky, 'Apropos of the Exhibition', *Op. cit.*, 84.
50. И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденные произведения Репина', *Огонек*, 1949, № 32, 16-17.
51. А.К. Лебедев и А.В. Солодовников, *Верещагин*, (Ленинград, 1987), 17, illustrates an oil sketch of *The Barge-haulers* (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev, 1866). Two oil studies of haulers in harness (Tretyakov Gallery, both 1866) appear at 18-19. Vereshchagin had seen similar scenes in Belgium and Egypt. See also К. Кравченко, 'Неопубликованные этюды Верещагина', *Искусство*, 1954, № 4, 63.
52. Ф.С. Мальцева, *Саврасов*, (Ленинград, 1984), 40. The painting is illustrated at 41. Savrasov also depicted some female haulers in *On the Volga* (Art Museum, Kazan, 1875), *Ibid.*, 50, plate 62. The women, who hold the tow rope above their heads, appear to be guiding the small vessel to its berth, certainly not straining.
53. A watercolour of 1869 by Yaroshenko, *Бурлак*, also shows a well-kempt figure in a decent state of dress. В. Секлюцкий, Н.А. Ярошенко, (Ставрополь, 1963), illustrations unnumbered.
54. Quoted in В.В. Стасов, 'Тормозы нового русского искусства', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II:614-615.
55. E. Shikes, 'Five Artists in the Service of Politics in the Pages of *L'Assiette au Beurre*', *Art and Architecture in the Service of*

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Politics, Eds. H. A. Millon and L. Nochlin, (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 166-167, 169 (fig. 11).

56. Repin complained of the injustice to Savitsky's work in a letter to Kramskoy, 17 February, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:110. On the history of the painting see З. Зонова, 'История создания картины К. А. Савитского *Ремонтные работы на железной дороге*', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Москва, 1958), Vol. II.

57. *Burlaki* has also been put to good visual use in the Soviet iconography. E. Samsonov's *На новые земли* (1954) replaces the weary down-trodden haulers by resolute, positive images of Soviet settlers. See Б. Неменский, 'Художники российской федерации', *Искусство*, 1955, № 1, 19.

58. А. Давыдова, 'История и современность', *Художник*, 1969, № 8, 30.

59. Full references for no less than seven positive reviews are in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Репин в годы борьбы России за независимость славян', *Художественное наследство*, I:396-398.

60. The roots of Repin's political canvases have been seen in the *Volost Administration Office* by virtue of its subject matter. See Д. В. Сарабьянов, 'Темы крестьянской жизни и революционного движения в творчестве 70-80-х годов XIX века', *Илья Ефимович Репин. Сборник статей*, (Москва, 1952), 12.

61. On the first two see И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:117, 180. *Peasant Children* is reproduced in *Ilya Repin 1844-1930*, catalogue of exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 60. A colour reproduction of *Farmhouse in the Ukraine* is also included, 14.

62. *Peasant with an Evil Eye* actually depicts N. F. Radov, a goldsmith and distant relative of Repin's: О. А. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 55.

63. Letter to Tretyakov, 19 April, 1875, quoted in Т. И. Курочкина, *Крамской*, (Ленинград, 1989), 68.

64. В. В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1878 года', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I:303.

65. В. Н. Москвинов, 'По репинским местам харьковщины. IV. Репин в гостях у земляков', *Художественное наследство*, II:415.

66. Letter to Kramskoy, 13 January, 1878, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:360.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Letter to Tretyakov, undated, 1877, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 37. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:319, n. 7, dates the letter to the first half of October, possibly 10th.

69. *A Cautious One* was described as an этюд in the catalogue of the 6th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1878: *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:151. Н. Вагнер, 'Одиннадцатая Передвижная выставка. Статья первая', *Новое время*, 1883, № 2521, 6 марта, described *He Returned* as "...well sketched, a study, but far from finished."

70. Letter to Tretyakov, 5 March, 1878. Quoted in *Репин. Письма*, I:208-209. The commissioners were Andrei Somov, a curator at the Hermitage, and the art historian Nikolai Sobko. Eventually *Burlaki* and

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Peasant with an Evil Eye were sent: И.Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I:196

71. Letter to Stasov, 2 October, 1877, *Репин. Письма*, I:207.

72. Letter to Kramskoy, 13 February, 1878, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:359-360.

73. 'Устав Товарищества передвижных художественных выставок', 23 ноября 1870, § 5, *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:57. The same regulation makes provision for flexibility "in exceptional circumstances", and presumably this was invoked.

74. See Kramskoy's letters to Repin of 17 February and 1 March, 1878, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:362-364. Repin's letter to Kramskoy of 6 March, 1878, *Ibid.*, II:364-365, expresses "great joy" that *The Archdeacon* was not selected for the Universal Exposition.

75. В.В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1878 года', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I:304.

76. В.В. Стасов, 'Художественные выставки 1879 года', *Ibid.*, II:26.

77. Letter to Stasov, 22 March, 1878, *М. Мусоргский. Письма и документы*, (Москва, 1932), 372.

78. В.В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1878 года', *Op. cit.*, I:304.

79. Letter to Kramskoy, 13 January, 1878, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:360.

80. Letter to Repin, 21 January, 1878, *Ibid.*, II:361.

81. An oil study of Ventsel for *Arrest of a Propagandist*, depicting him in the same pose as the village teacher, is reproduced in И.С. Зильберштейн, 'К истории создания картины *Арест пропагандиста*', *Художественное наследство*, II: between 340-341.

82. О.А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 66.

83. See G. Sternin, *Repin*, (Leningrad, 1985), 64, 65. This shorter, but better illustrated work, should not be confused with Sternin's larger work of that year, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*. See also *A Rest in the Wood* (1878) sold at Christie's London, 26 April, 1989, lot 173.

84. These include *Bunch of Flowers* (Abramtsevo, 1878) and *Apples and Leaves* (Russian Museum, 1879), the latter signed 'Moscow'.

85. Letter to Stasov, 7 August, 1878, *Репин. Письма*, I:217.

86. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 254, records only five exhibitions between 1880-1916.

87. See А.И. Замошкин, 'Неопубликованные рисунки и этюды И.Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1947, № 6, 5-35.

88. А.Г. Верещагина, *К вопросу о датировке некоторых произведений И.Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1969), suggests that this might have been executed during the late 1890s-early 1900s, though in this she is a lone voice.

89. Л. Певснер, 'Картина Репина *Проводы новобранца*', *Художник*, 1963, № 10, 35.

90. В.В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II:442.

91. Colour reproduction in *Ilya Repin 1844-1930*, catalogue of exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 63.

92. R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, (Harmondsworth, 1984), 150.

93. A. Herzen, *Childhood, Youth and Exile*, (Oxford, 1980), 29.

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94. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Репин в Каченовке. Работа над картиной *Запорожцы*', *Огонек*, 1953, № 5, 16. Some studies however predate this trip. See В. Фиаля, 'Работы русских художников в Чехословакии', *Искусство*, 1954, № 4, 72-73.

95. Repin recounted the meeting in a letter to Stasov, 17 October 1880, *Репин. Письма*, I:238-239. Tolstoy called the work "a painting" whereas Repin considered it unfinished. Here and elsewhere Repin refers to the painting by its original title, *Досвітки* ('Till daybreak').

96. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:322, n.77 for some thoughts on this.

97. Letter to Stasov, 20 August 1877, *Репин. Письма*, I:205.

98. A very dramatic pencil sketch, thought to be of the same period, extends the crowd into a long snaking procession vanishing into the horizon. О. А. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 56, plate 26.

99. A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1960), 248.

100. See G. Sternin, *Repin*, (Leningrad, 1985), plate 28.

101. Repin mentions returning to this subject in a letter to P. E. Reinbot, 5 July, 1910, И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 114.

102. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:229. О. А. Лясковская, *Op. cit.*, 91, concurs but uses the same illustration. Though the matter remains unresolved I am most grateful for the assistance of Mr Jiří Kotlík, Director of the Národní Galerie in Prague, in trying to unravel it. The Ateneum in Helsinki has a sketch of 1878 which is close to the first version, suggesting this is how Repin intended the work to be regarded. In any event, the later version of 1910-1924 could have no bearing on *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, of 1880-1883. On various studies for the work see В. Фиаля, *Русская живопись в собраниях Чехословакии*, (Ленинград, 1974), items 377-379.

103. Letter to Stasov, 20 May, 1881, *Репин. Письма*, I:254.

104. Letter to Stasov, 10 October, 1876, *Ibid.*, I:180.

105. В. С. Мамонтов, 'Репин в семья Мамонтовых', *Художественное наследство*, II:48.

106. Letter to Polenov, 5 October, 1882, *Репин. Письма*, I:269-272.

107. Letter to I. S. Ostroukhov, 12 March, 1883, quoted in *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, II:582, item 264, n. 1.

108. В. В. Стасов, 'Заметки о Передвижной выставке', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II:157.

109. *Ibid.*

110. С. Иванов, *Москва в жизни и творчество Репина*, (Москва, 1960), 68.

111. Letter to N. I. Murashko, 30 November, 1883, *Репин. Письма*, I:292.

112. See *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:150.

113. See for instance *Pilgrim* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1870) in В. Перов. *Выставка произведений к 150 летию со дня рождения. Каталог*, (Москва, 1988), 96, 106.

114. *Ibid.*, 126, 144.

115. For reproductions see respectively *Товарищество передвижных*

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художественных выставок, I:326; V. Fiala, *Russian Painting of the 18th and 19th Centuries*, (Prague, 1956), plate 87.

116. Letter to Repin, 6 March, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 61. Tretyakov cited *The Archdeacon* as embodying the correct ethos.

117. Letter to Tretyakov, 8 March, 1883, *Op. cit.*, 62. Repin repeated the overall importance of the whole to Murashko. See above, n. 111.

118. 'Разные вести и толки', *Гражданин*, 13 March, 1883, № 11.

119. 'Петербургские письма', *Московские ведомости*, 18 March, 1883, № 77.

120. 'Искусства и критика', *С.-Петербургские ведомости*, 28 August, 1883, № 231.

121. Quoted in В. В. Стасов, 'Тормозы нового русского искусства', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), II:620. A further abusive review, by P. Boborykin, appeared in *Новости и биржевая газета*, 24 March, 1883. A positive review by A. Somov, 'Петербургские выставки', *Художественные новости*, 15 March, 1883, appears to have been an exception.

122. Letter to Tretyakov, 5 March, 1884, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 86. A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 182-183, wrongly attributes this letter and various articles, including Suvorin's criticisms, all relating to *They Did Not Expect Him*, as pertaining to *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*.

123. On Suvorin's transformation from liberal reformist to ardent nationalist see E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 70-71.

124. Letter to Polenov, 5 October, 1882, *Репин. Письма к художникам и художественным деятелям*, (Москва, 1952), 42.

125. Letter to A. A. Vrubel, 6 January, 1883, *Врубель. Переписка. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1963), 56.

126. Letter to A. A. Vrubel, April 1883, *Ibid*, 59.

127. *Ibid*.

128. *Ibid*, 59-60.

129. *Ibid*, 60. The rift did not hinder Vrubel from taking Repin's advice on artistic matters as late as 1898: see И. Пружан, 'Малоизвестные произведения М. А. Врубеля в собрании Русского музея', *Сообщения Государственного Русского музея*, (Ленинград, 1957), V: 50-51.

130. In the same letter to his sister, *Op. cit.*, 60, Vrubel says he intends to have an "open, reciprocal exchange of views on art with Repin", but his following letters are silent as to whether this took place.

131. В. В. Стасов, 'Заметки о Передвижной выставке', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), II:156-157. Originally published in *Художественные новости*, 1883, № 7.

132. *Ibid*, 157.

133. Information contained in commentary notes for Stasov's article, *Избранные сочинения*, II:745-747.

134. *Новое время*, 5 апреля, 1883, № 2551.

135. A review by В. Сизов, *Русские ведомости*, 4 Мая, 1883, seems to have been a rare exception.

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136. H. Gifford, *Tolstoy*, (Oxford, 1982), 67.
137. Letter to P. I. Neradovsky, M. B. Нестеров, *Письма*, (Ленинград, 1988), 358.
138. F. and S. J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State U. P., 1980), 67.
139. М. Соловьев, *Московские ведомости*, 1884, № 128.
140. R. Newmarch, *The Russian Arts*, (London, 1916), 148. At 153 she says that the brutal Cossack might have found its way there "at the whispered suggestion of a 'progressive' friend".
141. A. Lebedev, *The Itinerants*, (London-Leningrad, 1982), 11.
142. А. Давыдова, 'История и современность', *Художник*, 1969, № 8, 28.
143. Before his review of *Burlaki* Dostoyevsky asserted that a work conceived without "tendency", "solely because of the artistic urge", would be of more use "than all songs of the shirt." 'Apropos of the Exhibition', *F. M. Dostoevsky. The Diary of a Writer*, (New York, 1954), 79.
144. The gravity and sincerity of the painting were a result of the artist's utilisation of childhood memories of his father's death. A. K. Лазуко, *Василий Максимов*, (Ленинград, 1982), 64.
145. See *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I: 398.
146. See H. Rubissow, *The Art of Russia*, (New York, 1946), plate 50. The author provides no date or location for the work. Shevchenko was born in 1886, so this would be a late example of critical realism.
147. To his credit Repin did join in Stasov's defence of the sculptor Mark Antokolsky, a convert to christianity, who was vilified as a Jew on the opening of his one-man show in February 1903. *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II: 184.
148. Trutovskaya's book was published in January that year. The drawing, now in the Tolstoy Museum in Moscow, was published without attribution. See А. Парамонов, *Иллюстрации И. Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 98-99.
149. Letter to Repin, 1-2 February, 1888, R. F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters*, (London, 1978), II: 436. Repin's letter to Tolstoy, 3 February, 1888, accepting, *Репин. Письма*, I: 340.
150. On Repin's illustrations on the theme of drunkenness see А. Парамонов, *Op. cit.*, 98-101.
151. A. Chekhov, *Peasants*, (Harmondsworth, 1982), 52. See А. Парамонов, *Op. cit.*, 151-157 on Repin's illustrations to Chekhov.
152. See for instance A. I. Korzhukin's *The Drunken Father's Family* (Kiev State Museum of Russian Art, 1861), О. Малашенко, *Киевский государственный музей русского искусства*, (Киев, 1955), 40-41, plate 14, and V. Makovsky's *No Entry* (Kiev State Museum of Russian Art, 1892), painted thirty years later, *Ibid.*, 50, plate 20. Makovsky had previously tackled the problem of urban down and outs in *A Doss House* (Russian Museum, 1889).
153. J. Beavington Atkinson, *An Art Tour to Russia*, (London-New York, 1986), 149.
154. See И. В. Поленова, *Ярошенко в Петербурге*, (Ленинград, 1983), 73-74. This excellently informative little book unfortunately neglects to provide locations for works or to number its illustrations.

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155. И. А. Бродский, 'Неизвестная серия рисунков Репина *Виды Петербурга*', *Художественное наследство*, I: 251-263. The drawings illustrated an article by Isabel Hapgood, 'The Nevsky Prospekt', which appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*, 1891, Vol. XII, 301-322.
156. See J. Beavington Atkinson, *Op. cit.*, 149-151 for a vivid description.
157. Letter to V. G. Chertkov, 29 August, 1887, *Репин. Письма*, I: 332-333.
158. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 11.
159. Letter to Stasov, 1 December, 1876, *И. Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), I: 387-388.
160. Letter to Repin, 13 June, 1873, *М. П. Мусоргский. Письма и документы*, (Москва, 1932), 251.
161. *Ibid.*, 250.
162. Letter to Stasov, 3 June, 1872, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 37.

Chapter 5. Political Paintings

1. N. G. Chernyshevsky, 'The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality', *Selected Philosophical Essays*, (Moscow, 1953), 369.
2. N. A. Dobrolyubov, 'Provincial Sketches', *Selected Philosophical Essays*, (Moscow, 1956), 55. First published in *Современник*, № 12, 1857.
3. F. Dostoyevsky, *The Devils*, (Harmondsworth, 1987), 343. See also 483 where Mr Verkhovensky defends the aestheticism of Shakespeare and Raphael against the utility of petroleum and a pair of boots.
4. N. A. Dobrolyubov, *Op. cit.*, XLIV.
5. М. Н. Шумова, *Русская живопись середины XIX века*, (Москва, 1984), 208.
6. А. И. Герцен, 'Н. Г. Чернышевский', *Колокол*, № 186, 15 июня, 1864, 1525. Chernyshevsky was sentenced to hard labour in 1862 for disseminating anti-government propaganda. He served 21 years in Siberia and died only six years after his release in 1883.
7. See E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 88.
8. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 176.
9. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы творческой биографии Репина. I. Неизвестные репинские рисунки периода пребывания в Академии художеств (1866-1869 гг.)', *Художественное наследство*, I: 97-99.
10. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 207. E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 90, wrongly says that Repin was in the habit of carrying such pictures himself.
11. Г. Недошивин, 'Образ революционера у Репина', *Искусство*, 1948, № 18, 87, who dates the work to 1877, suggests the scene might simply have been suggested by the words of a popular song.
12. The picture is sometimes referred to in contemporary literature as *Arrest of a Propagandist in a Village*.
13. See И. С. Зильберштейн, 'К истории создания картины *Арест Пропандиста*', *Художественное наследство*, II: 346, 349.
14. See О. А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 67, plate 72.

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15. A. Hilton, 'The Revolutionary Theme in Russian Realism', *Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics*, (Cambridge Mass., 1978), 114, suggests compositional similarities with religious works by Rembrandt and facial similarities with depictions of Christ by A. Ivanov, Ge and Kramskoy.
16. See Лясковская, *Op. cit.*, plates 74, 75a, 75b. See also *Ilya Repin. 1844-1930*, Catalogue of Exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 65.
17. See Г. Недошивин, 'Образ революционера у Репина', *Искусство*, 1948, № 18, 88; И.С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, II:353, and 337-360 generally on changes and variations connected with the painting.
18. According to Repin the painting was a great success. Letter to Stasov, 13 February, 1892, *Репин. Письма*, I:414.
19. Letter to Tretyakov, undated, 1892, *Письма И.Е. Репина. Переписка с П.М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 156.
20. See *Репин. Письма*, I:247-249.
21. И.С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, II:338-341. The other model was an art student, K. Pervukhin, *Ibid*, II:347-348, 345.
22. See И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденные произведения И.Е. Репина', *Огонек*, 1949, № 32, 17.
23. Repin's exhibition opened in St. Petersburg in November of 1891 and moved to Moscow early the following year.
24. И.С. Зильберштейн, 'К истории создания картины *Арест Пропандиста*', *Op. cit.*, 352-356.
25. И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденные произведения И.Е. Репина', *Op. cit.*, 17.
26. See Д.В. Сарабьянов, 'Темы крестьянской жизни и революционного движения в творчестве 70-80-х годов', *Илья Ефимович Репин. Сборник статей*, (Москва, 1952), 30-31. З.И. Крапивин, *Революционная тема в творчестве И.Е. Репина*, Рукопись кандидатской диссертации, (Москва, 1960), 92, is alone in suggesting this is a gathering of admirers of Tchaikovsky.
27. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Paintings, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 261.
28. *Ibid*.
29. An account of this bad-tempered trip, taken from Stasov's diaries, during which Repin and Stasov were at constant loggerheads over artistic differences, is in И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Путешествие И.Е. Репина и В.В. Стасова по западной Европе в 1883 году', *Художественное наследство*, I:429-524.
30. See Repin's long letter to Polenov, 17 July, 1883, *Василий Дмитриевич Поленов. Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), 184-186.
31. *Ibid.*, 187. Repin also met G.A. Lopatin, G.V. Plekhanov, M.N. Oshanina, N.S. Rusanov and I.I. Popov.
32. An account of the meeting, including Repin's later visit to Lavrov, is in Репин, 'Из воспоминаний о В.В. Стасове', *Далекое близкое*, 304-306. Stasov's more detailed account appears in И.С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, I:463-466.
33. See Н. Моргунова-Ридницкая, 'Репин и Коммуна', *Советское искусство*, 1941, № 21, 25 мая.

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34. According to Н. Ю. Зорграф, 'Новые подготовительные работы к картине И. Е. Репина *Не ждали*', *Очерки по русскому и советскому искусству*, (Ленинград, 1974), 159, a study of a male head (illustrated at 158) suggests work started in 1882, before Repin's trip to Europe. Most authorities, including those written since 1974, continue to quote 1883, the year in which the first oil version was finished.

35. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:257.

36. О. Лясковская, 'Произведение И. Е. Репина *Не ждали* и проблема картины в русской живописи второй половины XIX века', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Москва, 1956), between 104-105, illustrates both, as well as an undated sketch of a female exile. Afterwards referred to as 'Произведение И. Е. Репина *Не ждали*'.

37. In 1886 Repin repainted the canvas to show a male figure, only re-establishing the female figure in 1898.

38. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 208, n.35. Yaroshenko also painted a male figure in *Student* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1881).

39. See И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы творческой биографии Репина. V. Образ передовой русской женщины в малоизвестных произведениях Репина (1880-е годы)', *Художественное наследство*, I:169-172 on Yaroshenko's portraits of female progressives. 172-173 explores possible affinities between *Kursistka* and *They Did Not Expect Her*.

40. See Н. Ю. Зорграф, *Op. cit.*, 155-168. E. Valkenier, 'Repin's Search for the Revolutionary's Image in *They Did Not Expect Him*', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1312-1313, 1978, 209, suggests Yaroshenko's house arrest might have influenced Repin to produce a less positive image. A. Hilton, 'The Revolutionary Theme in Russian Realism', *Op. cit.*, 121 speculates that the release of Chernyshevsky in Aug 1883, a tired, out of touch figure, might have influenced the change.

41. On Repin's problems with the central figure see О. Лясковская, 'Произведение И. Е. Репина *Не ждали*', *Op. cit.*, 102-105; И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:256. Repin used photographs of known revolutionaries in his search for the right image: Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 209. A small drawing, mistakenly identified as Karakozov, and obviously done from a photograph, appeared at Sotheby's London, 5 April 1990, lot 142. The features and styles of beard and hair are remarkably close to the final version of 1888.

42. О. Лясковская, *Op. cit.*, 108.

43. Letter to Tretyakov, 8 April, 1884, *Переписка П. М. Третьякова и В. В. Стасова. 1874-1897*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1949), 91-92.

44. Letters to Tretyakov, 9 February, 28 February, 6 April, December 1884, *Ibid.*, 83, 84, 86, 93.

45. Letter to Tretyakov, February, 1885, *Ibid.*, 99. Tretyakov's reply, 10 March, 1885, *Ibid.*, 100.

46. Letter to Repin, 24 November, 1889, *Ibid.*, 140.

47. Н. Ю. Зорграф, 'Новые подготовительные работы к картине И. Е. Репина *Не ждали*', *Op. cit.*, 166. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (1937) I:266, shows a detail of the revolutionary's face.

48. There is much confusion about the relationship between the characters. The elder lady is often referred to as the exile's mother and the younger woman as his wife or sister. The children are usually

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assumed to be his own. Stasov identifies the latter as the revolutionary's wife and the children as his younger brother and sister. See 'Наши художественные дела', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 17, reviewing the Peredvizhnik exhibition in 1884. C. Brinton, 'Russia's Greatest Painter - Ilya Repin', *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. XL, November 1906, No. 5, 522, for no apparent reason, believes the central figure to be Dostoyevsky, an assertion repeated in *The Ilya Repin Exhibition*, (New York, 1921), no pagination.

49. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 260.

50. Letter to Tretyakov, 17 August, 1887, *Репин. Письма*, I: 331.

51. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 261. E. Valkenier, 'Repin's Search for the Revolutionary's image in *They Did Not Expect Him*, *Op. cit.*, 211, speculates that this might be related to an undated sheet of studies (illustrated as fig 3.). Н. Ю. Зорграф, *Новые подготовительные работы к картине Не ждали*, *Op. cit.*, 165, dates this sheet much earlier, 1883.

52. Ateneumin taidemuseo, Helsinki. Stock Nos: 1754.14 and 1754.15. Neither drawing, acquired from the artist in 1930, appears to have been considered by the many scholars who have written on the painting's evolution. A. Hilton, 'The Revolutionary Theme in Russian Realist Art', *Op. cit.*, 120, 122, illustrates one, fig. 14b, in connection with the original version, dated as 1884. Neither studies are in fact dated. I am most grateful to Mr Heikki Malme, in charge of drawings at the Ateneum, for his assistance in showing me these and other works.

53. И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, I: 261.

54. Letter to Repin, 12 December, 1889, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II: 146-147.

55. The following are based chiefly on observations in O. Ляковская, 'Произведение И. Е. Репина *Не ждали*', *Op. cit.*, 105.

56. See A. Н. Савинов, 'Заметки о картинах Репина. IV. Голгофа К. К. Штейбена в картине *Не ждали*, *Художественное наследство*, II: 332-333.

57. A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 147-148.

58. Д. В. Сарабьянов, 'И. Е. Репин', *История русского искусства*, (Москва, 1965) IX, 519.

59. O. Ляковская, 'Произведение И. Е. Репина *Не ждали*', *Op. cit.*, 109.

60. Letter to N. I. Murashko, *Репин. Письма*, I: 291-292.

61. The painterly realism of the work disposes one towards a comparison with Degas, though there is no mention of the artist in Repin's letters. G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1983), 384, notes Degas' influence in the right to left spacial direction and the sharp perspective of the floorboards, both of which appear in *Arrest of a Propagandist* and could have been compared with Caillebotte's *Les raboteurs de parquet*, (Musée d'Orsay, 1976). A French influence, from whatever source, seems undeniable.

62. A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1960), 110. See also R. Hare, *The Art and Artists of Russia*, (London, 1965), 220, for another aesthetic appreciation from an author extremely contemptuous of Peredvizhnik 'purpose' painting.

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63. Letter to Antokolsky, 4 March, 1884, В.В. Стасов. *Письма к деятелям русской культуры*, (Москва, 1962), I: 24.
64. See below n. 71, to which can be added 'Летопись искусства', *Всемирная иллюстрация*, № 790, 3 March, 1884; 'Передвижная выставка картин', *Русские ведомости*, № 91, 1 April, 1884.
65. See generally И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 257-260; О.А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 113-115.
66. С. Васильев, 'Художественные заметки', *Московские ведомости*, 1884, May, № 128,
67. Quoted in В.В. Стасов, 'Тормозы нового русского искусства', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), II: 662.
68. 'Rectus', С.-Петербургские ведомости, 1884, № 63.
69. *Гражданин*, 1884, № 10, 2.
70. *Вестник Европы*, 1884, № 4, 878-881. Quoted in О.А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 114.
71. Незнакомец, 'Письма к другу', *Новое Время*, 4 March, 1884, № 2879.
- 72 В.В. Стасов, 'Наши художественные дела', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), III: 9.
73. В.В. Стасов, *Ibid.*, III: 17-18.
74. Letter to Suvorin, 4 March, 1884, И.Н. Крамской. *Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II: 123.
75. Л.Н. Толстой, *Полное собрание сочинений*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1937), Vol. 49, 6-7.
76. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 16-17, and A. Hilton, 'The Revolutionary Theme in Russian Realism', *Op. cit.*, 126, n. 32, make parallels with Ivanov's *The Appearance of Christ to the People*.
77. The quality of the original spawned S. Grigoryev's *He Returned* (1954), a fine re-working which borrows the title of one of Repin's pictures and much else from *They Did Not Expect Him*. The estrangement between a middle-aged couple on the husband's return, the mistrustful daughter, the spatial use of floor boards, now running parallel to picture plane, French windows, the picture on the wall, even the same square format, are utilised. See *Искусство*, 1954, № 3, opposite 4.
78. Sometimes referred to as *Spurning Confession Before Execution*.
79. *Народная воля*, № 1, 1 October 1879. Minsky was the pen name of N. M. Vilenkin.
80. И.С. Зильберштейн, 'Работа Репина над картиной *Отказ от исповеди перед казнью*', *Репин. Сборник докладов*, (Москва, 1952), 55-56. Dmitry was involved with defending revolutionary figures, including, on one occasion, one of Karakozov's relations.
81. Letter to Repin, 8 May, 1888, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II: 128-129. О.А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 71, says Stasov first saw the painting in 1888. И.С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, 55, suggests that Repin's letter to Stasov of 15 December, 1879, (*Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II: 48), makes oblique reference to the canvas.
82. И.С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, 75-76.
83. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 247.
84. Н. Минский, 'Картина и эскизы И.Е. Репина', *Северный Вестник*, 1897, № 2, February, 230.
85. И.С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, 60-63. The drawing is wrongly

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dated 1882. See O. A. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 69, n. 3.

86. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Работа Репина над картиной *Отказ от исповеди перед казнью*', *Op. cit.*, 62-63.

87. *Ibid.*, 64. The other sketches of 1880 are reproduced 65-66.

88. A. Hilton, 'The Revolutionary Theme in Russian Realism', *Op. cit.*, 114-115 makes specific thematic and compositional comparisons with Rembrandt's *David and Saul* (The Hague, Mauritshuis, c. 1665) and *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (The Hermitage, Leningrad, c. 1669).

89. See Г. Г. Поспелов, 'О понимании времени в живописи 1870-1890-х годов. Картины посвященные судьбам личности', *Типология русского реализма второй половины XIX века*, (Москва, 1979), 193-94 for various comparisons, particularly Ge's *Christ before Pilate* (Tretyakov Gallery, 1890)

90. Quoted *Ibid.*, 194.

91. Е. Журавлева, 'Революционная тема в творчестве В. Е. Маковского', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Moscow, 1956), I: 144-145.

92. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 248.

93. Д. В. Сарабянов, *Народно-освободительные идеи русской живописи второй половины XIX в.*, (Москва, 1955), 177.

94. Н. Троицкий, 'Репин и Народная воля', *Искусство*, 1971, № 9, 56. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 92, regards this as the only unequivocally heroic portrayal of a revolutionary.

95. Н. Троицкий, *Op. cit.*, 58 (illustrated at 59).

96. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Образ передовой русской женщины', *Художественное наследство*, I: 173-177. It was located by the art historian D. V. Sarabyanov in 1955, in the National Gallery, Prague: Д. В. Сарабянов, *Народно-освободительные идеи русской живописи второй половины XIX в.*, (Москва, 1955), 180.

97. И. С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, I: 176-177.

98. В. Фигнер, *Запечатленный труд, воспоминания в двух томах*, (Москва, 1964), I: 374.

99. *Ibid.*, I: 272.

100. И. С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, I: 176-177. In 1883, at the 11th Peredvizhnik exhibition, Repin sold *He Returned* to fund surgical courses for women students: *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I: 263.

101. Letter to N. I. Murashko, *Репин. Письма*, I: 291-292.

102. И. С. Зильберштейн, *Op. cit.*, I: 167-185.

103. *Ibid.*, 177-180. Illustrated at 171.

104. В. В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II: 461,

105. On the evolution of this canvas see Е. Журавлева, 'Революционная тема в творчестве В. Е. Маковского', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Moscow, 1956), I: 142-144.

106. *Ibid.*, 144. In 1896 Makovsky painted another positive female image, *The Teacher* (Учительница).

107. The poet Nekrasov vividly described this phenomenon in his poem *Who Can Be Happy and Free in Russia?*, (Oxford, 1917), 47. First published in Russia 1879.

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108. *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, II: 429.
109. See B. Сурис, 'Искусство польского народа. По материалам Выставки польского изобразительного искусства в Москве, *Искусство*, 1952, № 5, 21.
110. A. Hilton, 'The Revolutionary Theme in Russian Realism', *Op. cit.*, 109.
111. Quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 239.
112. Further on Repin's contacts with revolutionary figures is in H. Троицкий, *Op. cit.*, 56; Г. Крапивин, 'Из жизни и творчества И.Е. Репина в Париже', *Op. cit.*, 381.
113. See J.H. Billington, *Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism*, (Oxford, 1958), vi. According to the author Repin and Yaroshenko also met Mikhailovsky, an active populist leader who remained in Russia, in the summer of 1874, *Ibid.*, 82. Repin, however, was a student in Paris 1873-1876, and there is no mention of Mikhailovsky in his letters.
114. See Г. Крапивин, *Op. cit.*, 381; *Русское искусство. Живопись. Скульптура. Графика, каталог*, (Алма-Ата, 1961), 45. For a reproduction see: П. Плахотина, И. Кучис, *Казахская государственная художественная галерея им. Т.Г. Шевченко. Отдел репродукций*, (Москва, 1966), 18.
115. Г.И. Прибульская, *Петербургский период в жизни и творчестве И.Е. Репина*, (Ленинград, 1975), 175.
116. See for instance А.И. Зотов, 'Репин и русская художественная критики', *И.Е. Репин. Сборник докладов*, (Москва, 1947), 100-101. Н. Троицкий, 'Репин и Народная воля', *Искусство*, 1971, № 9, 56, an article which regards Repin's revolutionaries as unflinchingly heroic and positive, affirms that Repin was opposed to political violence.
117. The Alexander III Museum, now the Russian Museum, Leningrad, did not actually open until 19 March, 1898, at which time Repin and many of his contemporaries had moved to the reformed Academy.
118. For a wider discussion on Alexander's ambitions for the arts see E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 123-127.
119. Letter to Stasov, 24, December, 1885, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II: 91-92.
120. Letter to Stasov, 19 June, 1886, *Ibid.*, II: 93.
121. Letter to Tretyakov, 10 August, 1884, *Репин. Письма*, I: 297-298.
122. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 284. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 126, suggests that the final version might attest "an allusion to the mute role of the populace." It seems obvious however that Repin painted the composition to order.
123. *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk in 1883, They Did Not Expect Him in 1884, and Ivan the Terrible in 1885*.
124. *Художественный журнал*, № 3-4, 1886. Quoted in E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 211, n. 42. According to Kramskoy's letter to Bogolyubov, 18 March, 1886, *И.Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II: 242, the work was shown at the 14th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1886, the first such show attended by the Tsar. Г.Г. Мясоедов, *Письма. Документы. Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1972), 100, confirms this. It does not appear however in the Peredvizhnik catalogue for that exhibition, re-published in 1987, suggesting how sensitively the work is still regarded: *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I: 305-311.

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125. This is one of a few paintings I have been unable to see. A small, fully populated oil study of the same name (1885) was shown to me by very helpful staff at the Tretyakov Gallery, but attempts to see the original were politely thwarted. The gallery has a further four studies from between 1885-1886: *Государственная Третьяковская Галерея. Каталог живописи XVIII-начала XX века (до 1917 года)*, (Москва, 1984), 389-390. I am most grateful to Mr M. Mansson for supplying me with a photograph of the painting.

126. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 284.

127. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденный и утраченный Репин', *Художественное наследство*, I: between 56-57.

128. A colour plate is in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (1937), I: opposite 280.

129. Repin complained that despite numerous requests Alexander would not consent to be painted from life, a practise the artist considered essential. А. В. Жиркевич, 'Встречи с Репиным', *Художественное наследство*, II: 172. An engraving of 1892, *The Emperor of Russia Blessing the Waters of the Neva at Epiphany*, in *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. XII, 266, appears to be Repin's only other portrait of the Tsar.

130. И. Э. Грабарь, 'К истории создания картины Торжественное заседание Государственного совета 7 мая 1901 года', *Художественное наследство*, I: 264. On the portrait of 1896 see И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 284, 286. Also of interest is an undated drawing, *Nicholas II Visiting a Hospital*, held by the Atheneum, Helsinki: stock No. 1754.62. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 241, records that Repin contributed two compositions for Nicholas' *Coronation Album* in May, 1896, but gives no further information.

131. *Ilya Repin*, Catalogue of exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 34.

132. И. Э. Грабарь, 'К истории создания картины Торжественное заседание Государственного совета 7 мая 1901 года', *Op. cit.*, I: 268, n. 1, lists 73 sitters, including seven members of the Royal family.

133. О. А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 206.

134. *Ibid.*, 227.

135. Letter to L. Andreyev, 28 January, 1917, *Репин. Письма*, II: 319. Ляковская, *Op. cit.*, 208 says Repin finally gave up using his right hand in 1905. А. В. Жиркевич, 'Встречи с Репиным', *Op. cit.*, II: 177, comments on Repin's tiredness at this time but apparent enthusiasm for the project.

136. Repin showed off his new invention in 1903: *Биржевые ведомости*, 22 March, 1903, № 146.

137. И. Э. Грабарь, 'К истории создания картины Торжественное заседание Государственного совета 7 мая 1901 года', *Op. cit.*, I: 270.

И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 133, mentions Natalya Nordman, Repin's companion at this time, using a new Kodak camera to assist in the recording process, but at II: 228 repeats his assertion that when offered the use of photographic assistance Repin "flatly refused to continue the work, insisting on personal sittings."

138. В. В. Стасов, 'Новая Картина Репина', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), III: 296.

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139. Letter to A. V. Zhirkevich, 7 October, 1901, *Репин. Письма*, II: 164.
140. See P. И. Власова, 'Этюды И. Е. Репина к картине Торжественное заседание Государственного совета 7 мая 1901 года', *Художники передвижники*, (Москва, 1975), 115-123.
141. In 1904 twenty two of the portrait studies appeared at the 32nd Peredvizhnik exhibition.
142. See 'Письма Репина к Чуковскому', *Искусство*, 1936, № 5, 102.
143. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 23-24.
144. The image is not mere fancy. Pobedonostsev frequently appeared in the guise of a vampire in the plethora of satirical journals which circulated in the early 1900s. See D. King and C. Porter, *Blood and Laughter. Caricatures from the 1905 Revolution*, (London, 1983), 105.
145. L. N. Tolstoy, *Resurrection*, (Harmondsworth, 1979), 383. This description, naturally, did not get past the censor.
146. *Художественный журнал*, № 3-4. Quoted in E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 127.
147. С. Маковский, 'Петербургские весенние выставки: Передвижная и академическая', *Журнал для всех*, 1904, № 5.
148. В. В. Стасов, 'Новая Картина Репина', *Op. cit.*, III: 299-300.
149. В. В. Стасов, *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 845.
150. Letter to Stasov, 11 December, 1903, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, III: 56. Stasov's article appeared in *Новости и биржевая газета*, 4 December, № 334.
151. F. Folgarait, 'Art-state-class: avant-garde art production and the Russian Revolution', *Arts Magazine*, 60, December 1985, 69.
152. О. А. Ляскова, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 202.
153. Letter to A. V. Zhirkevich, 20 October, 1894, *Репин. Письма*, II: 82.
154. Letter to K. I. Chukovsky, 24 March, 1925, *Ibid*, II: 356.
155. See for instance letters to Kramskoy, 8 December, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 268, and to N. Leskov, 19 February, 1889, *И. Е. Репин. Письма к писателям и литературным деятелям*, (Москва, 1950), 42-43.
156. И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Путешествие Репина и Стасова по западной европе в 1883', *Художественное наследство*, I: 484.
157. 'Наши художники', *Огонек*, 1911, № 49. Quoted in Е. Журавлева, 'Революционная тема в творчестве В. Е. Маковского', *Op. cit.*, I: 148.
158. At first permission was granted to include the work in the Peredvizhnik exhibition in Moscow, but before it opened the Governor General ordered its removal: Я. Д. Минченков, *Воспоминания о передвижниках* (Москва, 1980), 46. The painting was eventually shown at the World Exhibition in London 1910 and then in Rome, where the Russian ambassador in Italy protested about its inclusion in the Russian section. Е. Журавлева, 'Революционная тема в творчестве В. Е. Маковского', *Op. cit.*, I: 149.
159. Letter to A. V. Zhirkevich, 5 June, 1896, *Репин. Письма*, II: 111.
160. И. С. Жиркевич, 'Встречи с Репиным', *Op. cit.*, II: 170.
161. Д. И. Яворницкий, 'Как создавалась картина *Запорожцы*', *Художественное наследство*, II: 94.

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162. I. A. Brodsky's introductory essay to Repin's letters gives examples of Repin's aversion to autocracy, most of which have been quoted above, and only one of which predates 1905: *Репин. Письма*, I: 8.

163. Letter to A. P. Langovoi, 11 January, 1905, *Репин. Письма*, II: 189.

164. Letter to Polenov, 25 January, 1905, *Ibid.*, II: 193.

165. Letters between Repin, Polenov and Serov are contained in В. Д. Поленов, Е. Д. Поленова, *Хроника семьи художников*, (Москва, 1964), 651-653.

166. Репин, 'Валентин Александрович Серов', *Далекое близкое*, 370.

167. Text of the protest in В. А. Серов, *Переписка*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1937), 302. The artistic climate around the 1905 revolution is dealt with in Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России 1900-1910-х годов*, (Москва, 1988), 9-62; 11-12 on the reactions of Polenov and Serov.

168. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 138-140.

169. E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art: The Case of Repin', *Russian Review*, (Stanford, 1978), Vol. XXXVII, 23. A. Bird, *A History of Russian Painting*, (Oxford, 1987), 170, berates Repin for failing to condemn the Tsar, and for insisting instead on proof that he had personally ordered the shootings. As this turned out not to be the case Repin's reluctance, in this respect, might be regarded as sensible circumspection.

170. Репин, 'Валентин Александрович Серов', *Op. cit.*, 370.

171. See M. Guerman, *Art of the October Revolution*, (London, 1979), illustrations 6 & 7. Serov's works of 1905 are otherwise absent of political content and include personal and society portraits, as well as soothing, uneventful scenes of country life: И. Э. Грабарь, *Серов*, (Москва, 1980), plates 69-77.

172. Work by Kustodiev for *Красный смех*, 1906, № 2; for *Адская Почта*, № 3, 1906; and for *Жупел*, № 2, 1905, can be found in D. King and C. Porter, *Blood and Laughter. Caricatures from the 1905 Revolution*, (London, 1983), 57, 84, 119. Isaak Brodsky's works for *Леший*, № 1, 2 & 4, 1906, *Ibid.*, 60-61, 67. Bilibin's work on *Жупел* is dealt with in S. Golynets, *Ivan Bilibin*, (London-Leningrad, 1981), 185, Ills 72-75. Illustrations by Dobrynin for *Леший*, № 1, 1906 are in D. King and C. Porter, *Op. cit.*, 62, 64, 68; by Dobuzhinsky for *Жупел*, № 1 & 2, 1905, *Ibid.*, 119, 120; by Lansere for *Адская Почта*, № 2, 1906, *Ibid.*, 121.

173. Е. Журавлева, 'Революционная тема в творчестве В. Е. Маковского', *Op. cit.*, I: 149-150.

174. The petition was later published in *Право*, 8 мая, 1905.

175. Letter to Stasov, 26 March, 1905, *Репин. Письма*, II: 195.

176. *Ibid.* Glazunov, Lyadov, and the concert pianist and conservatoire teacher Ziloti, resigned in support of Rimsky-Korsakov.

177. Letter to Stasov, 26 March, 1905, *Репин. Письма*, II: 195.

178. Letter to A. P. Langovoi, 11 January, 1905, quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphics Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 244.

179. Letter to Stasov, 22 January, 1905, *Репин. Письма*, II: 191.

180. Letter to I. P. Tarkhanov, 19 May, 1905, *Ibid.*, II: 197.

181. Letter to I. I. Tolstoy, 6 February, 1905, *Ibid.*, II: 193.

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182. Letter to A. V. Zhirkevich, 26 June, 1906, *Репин. Письма*, II:216. A rare but fulsome example of the 'people's-revolutionary speak' so often attributed to Repin by Soviet writers.
183. Letter to Stasov, 7 December, 1905, *Ibid.*, II:204-206.
184. Letter to Repin, 1 July, 1906, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, III:125).
185. Letter to Stasov, 11 December, 1905, *Репин. Письма*, II:207.
186. Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России 1900-1910-х годов*, (Москва, 1988), 19.
187. See G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), plate 185, Catalogue No.296.
188. З. И. Крапивин, 'Из жизни и творчества Репина в Париже', И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 383. Lopatin was amongst the revolutionaries Repin met in Paris, 1883.
189. Н. Троицкий, 'Репин и Народная воля', *Искусство*, 1971, № 9, 58. Repin was still considering the portrait of Chernyshevsky in 1912: letter to P. N. Arian, 17 December, 1912, *Репин. Письма*, II:292.
190. See A. A. Сидоров, *Русская графика начала XX века*, (Москва, 1969), 140. Shortly before this, on 10th July, Repin wrote to the magazine *Slovo*, supporting Tolstoy's article in protest against the death penalty, *I Cannot Be Silent!* See letter to L. L. Tolstoy, 20 July, 1908, *Репин. Письма*, II:243-244.
191. А. Парамонов, *Иллюстрации И. Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 208, cites only four known works.
192. On the establishment of the Committee see *Былое*, 1906, № 3, 311.
193. К. А. Морозова, 'В Пенатах с Н. А. Морозовым', *Художественное наследство*, II:247. Repin painted one oil portrait of Morozov and three pencil portraits. See Л. К. Куванова, 'Из неопубликованной переписки И. Е. Репина с Н. А. Морозовым', *Вестник Академии наук СССР*, 1955, № 9, 74-78.
194. See E. B. Kirillina, 'О некоторых рисунках Репина', *Художник*, 1969, № 9, 50-51
195. See for instance the cover to *Зарево*, № 3, 1906 (artist unknown), complete with snakes, frogs, skulls, and red skies, the walls scrawled with despondent inscriptions: D. King and C. Porter, *Op. cit.*, 110.
196. *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, II:462, 467, 485, 490, 515 for examples. On Kasatkin generally see Я. Д. Минченков, *Воспоминания о Передвижниках*, (Ленинград, 1980), 213-233.
197. Information on these and others is in V. Fiala, *Russian Painting of the 18th and 19th Centuries*, (Prague, 1956), biographical appendix, IV. Precise dates or locations for the works, all executed between 1905-1906, are not cited. See also А. Парамонов, 'На рубеже веков', *Художник*, 1971, № 2, 63.
198. От редакции, 'Отрывки из воспоминаний И. Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1936, № 5, 68. Repin's only other work on this theme appears to be an oil painting of 1887, *The Stoker*, a fine study of a muscular torso which, but for the title, might be an academic life study. A very rough pencil sketch of a blast furnace at a factory was executed in 1896, but is unrelated to any finished work: see О. А. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), plates 80-81.

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199. А. Парамонов, *Op. cit.*, 141. Paramonov is discussing the graphic version of the painting, though as an image it differs very little.

200. See J.E. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde. Theory and Criticism*, Revised and enlarged edition, (London, 1988), 265-279 for various source documents on the AKhRR, including its founding declaration.

201. In April, 1926, Brodsky sent him a copy of his painting *The Shooting of the 26 Baku Commissars*, which Repin praised enthusiastically. Brodsky's letter to Repin, 15 April, 1926, *И.И. Бродский, Письма. Документы*, (Москва, 1956), 237; Repin's reply of 10 May, 1926, *Репин. Письма*, II:375-376.

202. E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art', *Op. cit.*, 26, suggests that Brodsky had been attempting to subvert Lunacharsky's even-handed artistic policy by claiming Repin for the AKhRR. Repin however appears to have enjoyed warm relations with the cultural commissar: letter to Lunacharsky, June 1926, *И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов* (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 99. Amongst a number of new Soviet publications brought by the delegation to Repin was a copy of Lunacharsky's *Essays on the Marxist Theory of Art*, inscribed 'To the Great Master, from A. Lunacharsky'; *Ibid*, 306. Memoirs by delegation members A.V. Grigoryev and P.A. Radimov, and by P.E. Bezrukikh, attesting to Lunacharsky's key role in the scheme, are in *Ibid.*, 286-306; See also Е. Кацман, 'Поездка к Репину в 1926 году', *Художественное наследие*, II:305-318, for a similar view.

203. See Repin's letter to I.I. Brodsky, October 1926, *Репин. Письма*, II:380. The text of Voroshilov's letter of 27 October is also included.

204. E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 27.

205. See memoir by П.Е. Безруких: Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 305. See also letter to Bezrukikh, 18 October, 1926, *Ibid.*, 307-308.

206. И. Гронский, *Новый мир*, 1935, № 11, 285. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:194 makes claim for Repin's support for the communist regime.

207. Рейн Круус, 'Два письма И.Е. Репина в Эстонию (1920г)', *Русская мысль*, № 3781, 23 Июня 1989, XIII. I am grateful to Mrs Irina Prehn for bringing this article to my attention, and to the writer, Rein Kruus, for subsequently sharing his written thoughts on its contents.

208. A. Lebedev, *The Itinerants*, (London, 1982), 20.

209. О.А. Ляскова, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 231, regards the work as a patriotic episode from 1914. Recently a sketch of identical composition was exhibited as 1917: *Ilya Repin (1844-1930)*, Catalogue of Exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 120.

210. 'Ответ анониму', Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 27-28.

211. To my knowledge. The work was shown and purchased at the 46th Perdvizhnik exhibition but Soviet writers do not specifically say whether its whereabouts is now known.

212. Both, together with many religious subjects and emigre portraits, are mention in the other letter to Vadim Anofriev, dated 26 April 1920: Рейн Круус, 'Два письма И.Е. Репина в Эстонию (1920г)', *Op. cit.*

213. Letter to I.I. Brodsky, late winter 1929, *И.Е. Репин. Письма к художникам и художественным деятелям*, (Москва, 1952), 384. Wrongly

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dated, it should be autumn 1926. The work was commissioned by the Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad. See И. И. Бродский, *Мой творческий путь*, (Ленинград, 1965), 103-105.

214. Letter to P. E. Bezrukikh, 18 October, 1926, Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 308.

215. The portrait unexpectedly came up for auction at Christie's London, 27 April, 1990, Lot 413, literally whilst I was writing this chapter, enabling me to illustrate the work here. How it arrived in the West is unclear. It was exhibited in C. Brinton, *The Ilya Repin Exhibition*, (New York, 1921), plate 15, but was clearly at Penaty in 1926. The Soviet Government has of late been buying many of Repin's works which appear at auction but since the identity of purchasers is confidential I must, unless the work subsequently appears in a national institution, assume it to be now in a private collection.

216. И. И. Бродский, *Op. cit.*, 101. A list of items, divided amongst Repin's family on his death, includes three sketches of Kerensky in watercolour, and watercolour and pencil: Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 344, 345, 346..

217. *Ibid.*, 288. According to Е. Кацман, 'Поездка к Репину в 1926 году', *Художественное наследство*, II:317, Repin gifted the work to the museum along with two drawings from a series called 'Tsarism'.

218. Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 288.

219. *Ibid.*, 304.

220. Е. Кацман, 'Поездка к Репину в 1926 году', *Op. cit.*, 315-316.

221. Letter to P. E. Bezrukikh, 25 July, 1926, *Репин. Письма*, II:379.

222. Police censorship of Manet's *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (Mannheim Kuntshalle, 1867) is an example of censorship enacted in a specific case, rather than as a way of life. See L. Nochlin, *Realism*, (Harmondsworth, 1971), 50.

223. A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1960), 100-111.

224. See E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 56-62 on Stasov's attempts to 'nationalise' Repin, Antokolsky and Kramskoy. In the latter case Stasov's selective editing of letters and articles led to the publisher withdrawing on the grounds that Kramskoy's thoughts were being reduced to dogma: *Ibid.*, 62.

225. See Репин, 'Иван Николаевич Крамской (Памяти учителя)', *Далекое близкое*, 148-188, a pro-nationalist memoir of Repin's mentor, first published in 1888, and written at Stasov's behest. See also Repin's letter to Stasov, 18 June, 1878, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:31, on the justness of the Russo-Turkish War.

226. Репин, 'Валентин Александрович Серов', *Далекое близкое*, 363.

227. Gorky, *Letters*, (Moscow, 1966), 32-33.

228. Letter to Tretyakov, 8 March, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 62.

229. В. В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II:438.

230. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 176.

231. Letter to Stasov, 27 July, 1899, *Репин. Письма*, II:153.

Chapter 6. Portraits

1. Н. Ге, 'Встречи', *Северный вестник*, IX, № 3, part 1, (март 1894), 233.
2. А. П. Боткина, *Павел Михайлович Третьяков*, (Москва, 1986), 91.
3. *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I: 61, 63.
4. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 257-295. See also Т. Лазарева, 'Кого изобразил Репин', *Вечерний Ленинград*, 17 января 1986, on the problems of identifying many of Repin's sitters.
5. See И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Утраченные портреты писателей работы Репина', *Огонек*, 1950, № 40, 23-25. Tretyakov commissioned a portrait of Chekhov in 1897 but it was never undertaken, despite Chekhov's great enthusiasm for Repin's work: А. П. Чехов, *Полное собрание сочинений и писем*, (Москва, 1948), 18: 309. Repin also tried to paint Bunin's portrait, which the writer too considered a great honour: И. А. Бунин, *Собрание сочинений*, (Москва, 1988), VI: 233.
6. Г. А. Тюменева, 'Музыка в жизни Репина', *Художественное наследство*, I: 544-579.
7. On Repin's portraits of medical figures see В. Н. Москвинов, 'Репин и русские врачи', *Медицинский работник*, 1955, 2 декабря.
8. Ю. Келдыша и В. Яковлева, *М. П. Мусоргский. К пятидесятилетию со дня смерти, 1881-1931. Статьи и материалы*, (Москва, 1932), 216-217.
9. Letter to Stasov, 16 February, 1881, *Репин. Письма*, I: 243.
10. В. В. Стасов, 'Портрет Мусоргского', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II: 120. First published in *Голос*, 17 марта 1881, № 76.
11. В. В. Стасов, *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), contains no less than ten articles on Musorgsky's genius.
12. В. В. Стасов, 'Портрет Мусоргского', *Op. cit.*, II: 121.
13. Kramskoy's article, 'Открытое письмо к В. В. Стасову', appeared in *Новое время*, 1881, 30 March. Stasov's letter to Tretyakov, affirming Kramskoy's comments, 18 March, 1881, quoted in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 11-12. See Repin's letters to Stasov, 22 March and 12 April, 1881, condemning Kramskoy's intemperance: *Репин. Письма*, I: 248, 251.
14. See Repin's letter to Stasov, 12 April, 1881, *Ibid.*, I: 252. On Repin's deep appreciation of Surikov's painting see letters to Tretyakov, 27 February, 1881, *Ibid.*, I: 246, and to Surikov, 3 March, 1881, *Ibid.*, I: 247.
15. Letter to Stasov, 18 March, 1881, *Ibid.*, I: 247.
16. В. В. Стасов, 'Памяти Мусоргского', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 36.
17. See Л. Зингер, 'Портреты Репина 80-х годов', *Илья Ефимович Репин. Сборник статей*, (Москва, 1952), 60-61 on Pisemsky's portrait.
18. В. В. Стасов, 'Наши художественные дела', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 15. Repin painted five oil portraits of Stasov in all, and 16 drawings.
19. П. 'Как И. Е. Репин написал портрет В. В. Стасова', *Петербургская газета*, 1901, № 27, 28 января. See also С. Г. Капанова, 'Илья Ефимович Репин', *Очерки по истории русского портрета второй половины XIX века*, (Москва, 1965), 183-184.
20. Letter to Tretyakov, 3 April, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 67.

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21. Репин и Толстой. *Переписка II: Материалы*, (Москва, 1949), 115-154 details all Repin's depictions of Tolstoy and his family, including 12 oil portraits of the writer.
22. Репин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', Василий Суриков. *Письма, Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 225.
23. Letter to V.G. Chertkov, 29 August 1887, *Репин. Письма*, I: 332.
24. Репин, 'В ясной поляне', *Далекое близкое*, 399.
25. *Ibid.*, 403-404.
26. A. Tolstoy, *Tolstoy. A Life of My father*, (Massachusetts, 1975), 295.
27. Repin was reminded of the hauler Kanin whilst watching Tolstoy plough, and later, in 1891, connected him with the heroic ploughman of Russian legend, Mikula Selyaninovich: Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 285, 402 respectively.
28. Letter to V.G. Chertkov, October 1887, *Репин. Письма*, I: 338-339.
29. Letter to N.N. Strakhov, 10 November, 1887, reproduced in *Репин и Толстой. Переписка II: Материалы*, (Москва, 1949), 43. See also Tolstoy's letter to Repin, 1-2 February, 1888, in R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters*, (London, 1978), II: 436.
30. Both portraits were begun during Repin's visit to Yasnaya Polyana in 1891, though this work was not completed until 1901, when it was exhibited at the 29th Peredvizhnik. The painting is sometimes referred to as *Tolstoy at Prayer* (И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 49) a title which Soviet writers have been keen to drop, though Repin's memoir makes it quite clear that he sketched Tolstoy at prayer: Репин, 'В ясной поляне', *Op. cit.*, 400-401.
31. See *Russian and Soviet Painting*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, (New York, 1977), 33.
32. Letter to T.L. Tolstaya, 31 July, 1891, *Репин. Письма*, I: 380.
33. С.Л. Толстой, 'Мои воспоминания о Репине', *Художественное наследство*, II: 116. According to the writer Tolstoy claimed Repin had never seen him bare-foot, though this contradicts the artist's memoir: *Далекое близкое*, 399. A. Tolstoy, *Op. cit.*, 408, confirms her father's dislike of the portrait.
34. М.М. Раковой, (Ed), *Л.Н. Толстой и изобразительное искусство. Сборник статей*, (Москва, 1981) traces portraits, illustrations and images of Tolstoy from Kramskoy's portrait of 1873 to Soviet fabrications as late as 1978.
35. A. Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy. Later Years*, (London, 1911), 407-408.
36. С.А. Толстая, *Дневники, в двух томах*, (Москва, 1978), II: 18.
37. R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, (New York, 1985), 573, entry for 26 September, 1907. This is a rare instance where Repin based his work on a photograph. Compare the illustration in И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 206 with the photograph in Репин, 'О графе Льве Николаевиче Толстом', *Художественное наследство*, I: 325. An account of the 1907 and 1908 visits to Yasnaya Polyana is in Н.Б. Северова, *Интимные страницы*, (Ст. Петербург, 1910), 77-140.
38. И.Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, II: 145. The painting hangs in the staff office of the Repin Museum, Penaty, away from public scrutiny.

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39. А. Греч, 'Образ Толстого в русской живописи', *Печат и революция*, 1928, № 6, 156-157.
40. М. Gorky, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Chekhov and Andreev*, (London, 1934), 20.
41. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 398.
42. L.N. Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, (Philadelphia, 1896), 74. According to most sources this work was published in 1898, and though Repin's comments confirm this, this edition is clearly dated two years earlier.
43. Tolstoy admitted to Stasov that there were many similarities between *What is Art* and Chernyshevsky's *Aesthetic Relationship of Art to Reality*, though he considered Chernyshevsky's work crude: *Литературное наследство*, № 37-38, (Москва, 1939), 455.
44. L.N. Tolstoy, *Op. cit.*, 216-217 especially.
45. Н. Troyat, *Tolstoy*, (Harmondsworth, 1987), 492, quotes Stepan Behrs, Tolstoy's brother in law, that the writer would become agitated when listening to music "in a way that seemed to express fear."
46. Letter to Tretyakov, 8 March, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 62.
47. Letter to Tolstoy, 21 March, 1898, *Репин. Письма*, II:138.
48. Letter to A.V. Zhirkevich, 27 January, 1898, *Ibid.*, II:138.
49. Н. Troyat, *Op. cit.*, 736, states unequivocally that Repin conferred his blessing on *What is Art?* The emphasis on religious painting in Tolstoy's work is an aspect Soviet commentators deny Repin shared: see О. А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 211; G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 22. Repin, however, specifically told Tolstoy that "...the quest for religion is the greatest thing in our lives!". Letter to Tolstoy, n. 47 above. Though he could not embrace his artistic philosophy Repin did share Tolstoy's humanitarian ethics and contributed to some of the writer's ventures, illustrating a series of popular education books for peasants and workers: A. Tolstoy, *Tolstoy. A Life of My Father*, (Massachusetts, 1975), 272-273. In addition to work on *War and Peace* and *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, and to the works on alcoholism and venereal disease discussed in chapter 4, Repin illustrated many of Tolstoy's philosophical works and morality tales, including *What is to Be Done?*, *The Imp and the Crust*, *What Men Live By* and *The Two Brothers and the Gold*. See А. Парамонов, *Иллюстрации И. Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 63-108; I. Chepik, 'Repin the Illustrator', *Soviet Literature*, 1980, IX: 176-178.
50. Л. О. Пастернак, *Записи разных лет*, (Москва, 1975), 210. See also Turgenev's witty poem on the fruitlessness of arguing with Stasov, translated in F. and S.J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State U.P., 1980), 77.
51. Репин, 'Николай Николаевич Ге и наши претензии к искусству', *Далекое близкое*, 311-339. First published in *Нива*, 1894, № 11, 517-550.
52. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:294.
53. Letter to Tretyakov, 8 April, 1881, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 48.
54. Letter to Stasov, *Репин. Письма*, I:244.

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55. The assertion in E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 81, that the Peredvizhnik portrait "was always a comment on the general through the particular" seems inappropriate for the vast majority of Repin's highly individualised and idiosyncratic portraits.

56. В. В. Стасов, 'Поход наших эстетиков', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 71.

57. Л. О. Пастернак, *Op. cit.*, 178.

58. *Ibid.*

59. See Т. И. Курочкина, *Крамской*, (Ленинград, 1989), 57-58.

60. See И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденные произведения Репина', *Огонек*, 1949, № 32, 17. Repin painted a more formal portrait of Pirogov in 1881 (Tretyakov Gallery), as well as sundry sketches and a bust: G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 258-259, catalogue entries 87, 94 and 96.

61. See Б. Вольман, *Русские нотные издания XIX-начала XX века*, (Ленинград, 1970), 126.

62. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 90. The difficult rendition of near similar tones was one of the exercises Repin set the young Serov as a pupil and later incorporated into his teaching methods at the Academy: Репин, 'Валентин Александрович Серов', *Далекое близкое*, 362.

63. See Г. А. Недошивин, 'О мастерстве Репина-Портретиста', *Государственная Третьяковская галерея. Материалы и исследования*, (Москва, 1956), I: 172. Repin also painted Strepetova in 1882, (Tretyakov Gallery). On Repin and Strepetova see Т. Г. Зенковская, 'Письма И. Е. Репина к П. А. Стрепетовой', *Театральное наследство*, (Москва, 1956), 402-404; Т. Павлова, 'Репин и Стрепетова', *Театр*, 1970, № 8, 171-173. A series of studies depicting Strepetova in various roles was exhibited in *Ilya Repin. 1844-1930*, Catalogue of Exhibition at Retretti, (Helsinki, 1989), 72. Amongst other theatrical notables Repin painted M. N. Klimenova-Muromtseva in 1883, the first exponent of Tatyana in Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*: И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 88-90. On Repin and the theatre generally see Г. И. Прибульская, 'И. Е. Репин и русский драматический театр', *Творчество И. Е. Репина и русское искусство 2-й половины XIX-XX веков*, (Ленинград, 1987), 6-14.

64. Information regarding Repin's private life is included in F. and S. J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 89-91, drawing on A. V. Zhirkevich's diary of visits to the Repin household: А. В. Жиркевич, 'Встречи с Репиным', *Художественное наследство*, II: 119-178.

65. Some of Repin's letters to Zvantseva appear in *Репин. Письма*, but are heavily edited from those held in the Repin Archive, Repin Institute Leningrad. On their relationship see F. and S. J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 95-96. A portrait of Zvantseva, dated 1889, is held by the Ateneum, Inventory No. A II 1371.

66. Letter of 4 November, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с Л. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 79.

67. On Repin's eccentricities and the following observations on his family relationships see F. and S. J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 112-114. In conversation with Irina Prehn, the wife of the artist Eric Prehn, who visited Repin in the early 1920s and was confronted by a series of

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unusual domestic practices, I was informed that her husband though he had entered "a mad house".

68. Eric Prehn never saw Nadya during his visit and was told by Vera that she never left her room. Ironically, in view of the eccentric lifestyle at Penaty, Prehn said: "I was told she apparently considered them all odd, perhaps even stupid, and did not want to mix with them."

69. In conversation with members of the staff at the Ateneum, some had vivid memories of Yury, often seen walking bare-foot in the snow, convinced of his saintly appearance.

70. Letter to Stasov, 27 July, 1899, *Репин. Письма*, II:153.

71. See М. А. Немировская, 'Отдых', *Художник*, 1977, № 2, 53.

72. This portrait possibly provided the impetus for Vrubel's work of 1886, *Girl Against a Persian Carpet* (Museum of Russian Art, Kiev), which, with a more ethereal treatment, utilises the same components.

73. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:84, 282; Е. Журавлева, 'Творчество И. Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1936, №5, 37; Н. Волков, 'Репин и современная советская живопись', *Искусство*, 1971, № 5, 66-67.

74. On Repin's association with General Dragomirov see И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новые страницы творческой биографии Репина. VI. Генерал М. И. Драгомиров в изображении Репина (1889-1898 гг.)', *Художественное наследство*, I:185-198. Sofya's portrait is discussed at 194-195. Serov also painted her portrait, sitting in on sessions at Repin's Moscow studio: И. Э. Грабарь, *Валентин Александрович Серов. Жизнь и творчество 1865-1911*, (Москва, 1980), 148.

75. Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, a pupil of Repin's, recalled watching with wonder how his large brushes performed the most dexterous and delicate of tasks: "The brush obeys him magically...it performs all he wishes." А. П. Остроумова-Лебедева, *Автобиографические записки*, (Ленинград, 1935), 141.

76. All unfounded according to A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1960), 189-190. A selection of Repin's sketches from the Baroness's salons can be found in an unpaginated section in *Репин. Сборник докладов*, (Москва, 1952), following 135.

78. The name given to exhibitions held in 1890, 1892 and 1898 featuring works in pen, pencil, ink, gouache and oil on paper.

77. A thorough account of this innovative venture is in A. Hilton, 'The Exhibition of Experiments in St. Petersburg and the Independent Sketch', *Art Bulletin*, December 1988, 677-698. Though Repin projected an international flavour to the exhibition, only two foreign artists were eventually included, *Ibid.*, 681.

79. 'Условия для приема картин экспонентов на выставки Товарищества передвижных художественных выставок', *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, II:423-424.

80. See for instance the pencil portrait of Maria Artsybusheva, 1880: М. А. Немировская, 'Портретная графика И. Е. Репина 1878-1882 годов', *Очерки по русскому и советскому искусству*, (Ленинград, 1974), 144.

81. Repin's change of graphic style is dealt with in А. А. Сидоров, *Русская графика начала XX века. Очерки истории и теории*, (Москва, 1969), 56, 76, 82.

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82. Other fine examples include that of Ekaterina Batashova (Abramtsevo, 1891) and Alexandra Botkina (Tretyakov Gallery, 1901). See G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), plates 157 and 173. Serov's portrait is reproduced at plate 174. A very good example of this work is in the Ateneum, a portrait of the actress V.V. Pushkaryova, charcoal on canvas, (1899). Inventory No. A II 1370.

83. А. Бенуа, *Размышляет*, (Москва, 1968), 191-192.

84. See respectively В.В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1878 года', *Избранные сочинения*, I: 304; 'Портрет Мусоргского', *Ibid.*, II: 121; 'Новая картина Репина', *Ibid.*, III: 299.

85. Letter to Tretyakov, 8 March, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 62.

86. Undated letter to Sergei Pavlovich, И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 119.

87. Letter to Stasov, 20 February, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 115-116 on viewing Rembrandt's etchings in a Parisian library. A letter to Stasov, 25 April, 1874, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I: 93-94, says that his thoughts are constantly with Velazquez and Spain.

88. Seven are included in G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, Catalogues Nos: 49, 161, 235, 236, 308, 324, 325.

89. Letter to Tretyakov, 29 May, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 73. On Stasov's disagreements with Repin over the merits of Velazquez see И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Путешествие Репина и Стасова по западной Европе в 1883 году', *Художественное наследство*, I: 475.

90. *Ibid.*, I: 451.

91. 'Воспоминания о художнике', Василий Суриков. *Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 226.

92. Д. В. Сарабьянов, *Русская живопись XIX века среди европейских школ*, (Москва, 1980), 135-136, debunks comparisons between the realist portraits of Courbet and Repin on the grounds that Repin's are more penetrating and accomplished. Despite Courbet's high reputation in the West this is a view one cannot but feel sympathy towards when confronted with the statically posed and muddy-hued works of the French painter.

93. Letter to Tretyakov, see above n. 89.

94. See for instance the portrait of Lidiya Kuznetsova (1901), then a student but later Professor of History at Petersburg University, sold at Christie's London, 6 October 1988, lot 439, a spectacular vision in a gold and black gown adorned with black, white and yellow lillies, holding a large black bird. The painting has an almost Japanese sense of decorative spatial arrangement and though occasionally mentioned in Soviet literature it is not illustrated, far less shown in its dazzling colour. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 287; Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 148-149, 154.

Chapter 7. Reactions to Artistic Innovations. The 1890s and Beyond

1. Yelena Polenova, the younger sister of the artist, was, like Vrubel and Serov, influenced by the freer and more relaxed atmosphere

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at Abramtsevo, and though she respected Repin, (as did Vrubel), felt he represented the artistic past. See her letter to S. Ivanov, 15 December, 1891, В.Д. Поленов. Е.Д. Поленова. *Хроника семьи художников*, (Москва, 1964), 476-477.

2. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 130.

3. Letter to Stasov, 21 July, 1886, И.Н. Крамской. *Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), II:251-253.

4. See Л.О. Пастернак, *Записи разных лет*, (Москва, 1975), 58.

5. Reproduced in *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:373.

6. Letter to N. Polenova, 7 March, 1891, Василий Дмитриевич Поленов. *Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), 275-277.

7. The new Statutes of 30 April, 1890, are in *Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок*, I:375-376.

8. *Ibid*, II:389, item 4.

9. Letter to K. Savitsky, 8 September, 1887, Репин-Стасов. *Переписка*, II:237-238.

10. 'В правление Товарищества передвижных (художественных) выставок', 27 September, 1887, Репин. *Письма*, I:335.

11. Repin did not rejoin the Society until 1898 but he continued to show with them as an exhibitor (экспонент).

12. On the Tsar's ambitions see А. Савинов, 'Академия Художеств и Товарищество передвижных художественных выставок', *Проблемы развития русского искусства*, (Ленинград, 1972), II:42-56; E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 123-127.

13. *Мнения лиц опрошенных по поводу пересмотра устава Императорской Академии художеств*, (Ст. Петербург, 1891).

14. Quoted in Г.Ю. Стернин, *Русская художественная культура второй половины XIX-начала XX века*, (Москва, 1984), 66. Repin's letter to Serov, 16 January, 1890, Репин. *Письма*, I:364, urging Serov to exhibit this and *Girl with Peaches* instead of the more staid, posthumous portrait of his father.

15. Л.О. Пастернак, *Op. cit.*, (Москва, 1975), 42-43.

16. *Ibid.*, 135. On the sketching evenings at Polenov's Moscow flat-cum-studio, which included Arkhipov, Vinogradov, Golovin, Sergei Ivanov, Serov, Nesterov and Levitan, *Ibid.*, 33-44.

17. К. Чуковский, *Илья Репин*, (Москва, 1983), 61.

18. Pasternak recorded that Repin was one of the few voices to which Serov paid heed, Л.О. Пастернак, *Op. cit.*, 131. Despite their differences Repin changed his attitude towards Vrubel during the 1890s: О.А. Ляскова, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 229. For Korovin's appreciative memoir of Repin see И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 158-160.

19. Quotes respectively in A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 131; *Memoirs*, (London, 1960), 110.

20. See letter to V. Grabar, 12 December, 1891, Игорь Грабарь. *Письма. 1871-1917*, (Москва, 1974), 30.

21. В.В. Чуйко, 'Художественные выставки гг. Репина и Шишкина', *Наблюдатель*, 1892, (февраль) № 2, 52-63; М. Соловев, 'Петербургская художественная жизнь', *Московские ведомости*, 29 November, 1891, № 330.

22. 'И.Е. Репин', *Новое время*, 27 November, 1891, № 5657. Despite

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growing differences Stasov vigorously defended the exhibition: 'Бор наши ценители и судьи', *Северный вестник*, 1892, January, № 1, 84-102.

23. Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России начала XX века*, (Москва, 1976), 196.

24. Details of all exhibitions are in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 288-289. Four of the previous five foreign shows are accounted for by the exhibition of *Burlaki* in Vienna 1873, Repin's two student appearances at the Paris Salon in 1875 and 1876, and the Paris Universal Exposition of 1878 from which *The Archdeacon* was debarred. An exhibition in Munich, 1883, accounts for the fifth.

25. Letter to T. L. Tolstoya, 27 June, 1896, *Репин. Письма*, II:117.

26. See A. Hilton, 'The Exhibition of Experiments in St. Petersburg and the Independent Sketch', *Op. cit.*, 681. Surikov and Serov, for reasons best known to themselves, declined to exhibit.

27. A detailed account of the works exhibited and the critical responses are in A. Hilton, *Ibid.*, 690-695.

28. Letter to M. V. Verevkina, 20 February, 1894, *Репин. Письма*, II:54-55. See also letters to E. P. Antokolskaya, 24 January and August 7, 1894, *Ibid.*, II:51, 74-75, on his inability to find meaning in his work.

29. A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1964), II:125.

30. Репин, 'Николай Николаевич Ге и наши претензии к искусству', *Далекое близкое*, 311-339.

31. Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России на рубеже XIX-XX веков*, (Москва, 1970), 259.

32. Repin's letter to Polenov, 14 May, 1897, *Репин. Письма*, II:125 makes reference to Polenov's exclusion, seemingly at the behest of the new Vice President, Alexander III's appointee, I. I. Tolstoy.

33. М. А. Рутченко, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Василий Суриков. Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 246.

34. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 133-134.

35. Letter to D. V. Stasov, 28 October, 1891, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, III:422.

36. Letter to Stasov, 11 June, 1894, *Репин. Письма*, II:66-67. Repin was by now master of his own estate, Zdravnevo, possibly confirming Stasov's fears that his gentrification was now complete. E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 120-123, deals with the 'embourgeoisement' of several peredvizhniks, hankering after middle-class lifestyles, but should be used with caution. Maksimov, for instance, is said to have been one of the few Peredvizhniks who lived "on the verge of poverty" (120), yet is later included amongst those whose work declined, due to painting to routine, as he struggled to finance "the extravaganza of country living à la nobility". (122).

37. Репин, 'Письма об искусстве', *Далекое близкое*, 412-458.

38. Letter to M. Antokolsky, 3 November, 1893, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:427-28.

39. Seventh letter, 5 November, 1893, *Далекое близкое*, 434-435. Young artists were increasingly studying in Munich and Repin considered it essential to take this into consideration when planning

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the reforms to the Imperial Academy. Pasternak, who studied in Munich, described it as "second only to Paris." Л. О. Пастернак, *Записи разных лет*, (Москва, 1975), 26, and 26-31 generally.

40. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 451-453.

41. *Ibid.*, 412-415. In 1916 Repin described Bryullov as "The greatest European painter of the 19th century." 'Воспоминания о художнике', Василий Суриков. *Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 227. See also И. Гинабург, 'Наследие Брюллова в оценке Репина', *Художественное наследство*, I: 525-543.

42. В. В. Стасов, 'О значении Брюллова в русском искусстве', *Русский вестник*, 1861, № 34-35. See also И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 32-34. Stasov had previously compared the integrity and veracity of *Burlaki* with the "academic devices and falsehoods" of Bryullov: 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Избранные сочинения*, II: 439.

43. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 413.

44. *Ibid.*, 414.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Letter to M. V. Verevkina, 20 August, 1895, *Репин. Письма*, II: 108.

47. 'В защиту новой Академии художеств', *Неделя*, 1897, № 10, 5-32.

48. В. В. Стасов, 'Просветитель по части художества', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 209.

49. Information on Repin as a teacher can be found in И. А. Бродский, *Репин педагог*, (Москва, 1960), and in three articles from И. Е. Репин. *Сборник докладов*, (Moscow, 1952): А. П. Остроумова-Лебедева, 'Годы учения у И. Е. Репина', 17-22; Г. Н. Горелов, 'Великий художник и учитель', 27-33; И. А. Бродский, 'Художественно-педагогические взгляды И. Е. Репина', 34-46. A series of memoirs written by various of Repin's pupils can be found in *Художественное наследство*, II: 185-240.

50. Letter to V. V. Verevkina, 16 August 1894, *Репин. Письма*, II: 76.

51. Letter to Ye. Zvantseva, 22 March, 1895, quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 240.

52. In 1895 Repin had 38 pupils, in 1898, 50, and in 1904, 96. None of the other former Peredvizhniki had more than 25 at any time. И. А. Бродский, *Репин педагог*, (Москва, 1960), 44, quoted in A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 202.

53. И. А. Бродский, *Op. cit.*, 18.

54. Я. А. Чахров, 'Репин и его ученики в работе над коллективной картиной', *Художественное наследство*, II: 224-228.

55. See И. А. Бродский, 'Художественно-педагогические взгляды И. Е. Репина', *Op. cit.*, 40, 43. See also 'Неопубликованные рукописи И. Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1940, № 5, 29, 30, stressing the importance of working from nature to his students.

56. Letter to Tretyakov, 29 May, 1883, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 73-74.

57. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 361, 363.

58. И. А. Бродский, *Op. cit.*, 44.

59. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 444-445.

60. И. А. Бродский, *Op. cit.*, 35, lists a roll call of honour which expands on these names to include many more of a minor nature.

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61. See Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 357-359. A. Hilton, *Op. cit.*, 219-258, is devoted to a detailed account of Repin's influence on Serov.
62. А. Остроумова-Лебедева, *Автобиографические записи*, (Ленинград, 1935), 137-138.
63. М. Добужинский, *Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1987), 150.
64. Н. Молева и И. Белютин, *Русская художественная школа второй половины XIX-начала XX века*, (Москва, 1967), 40-41.
65. И. Я. Билибин, 'Памяти Репина', *Современные записки*, (Париж), 1930, 44. Quoted in S. Golynets, *Ivan Bilibin*, (London-Leningrad, 1981), 181.
66. P. Sepp, 'Mõned mälestused prof. I. Rjepinist' (Some reminiscences about Professor I. Repin), *Kodu*, 1920, № 2, July, 67-70. Sepp refers to Malyavin's painting by its alternative title *The Women*, (*Бабы*). I am sincerely indebted to Mr Rein Kruus for bringing this item to my attention and for translating a summary of its contents into English. On the scandal of the painting's rejection see Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России на рубеже XIX-XX веков*, (Москва, 1970), 274. A. Hilton, *Op. cit.*, 217, mistakenly identifies the work as *The Whirlwind*, which was not painted until 1906.
67. И. А. Бродский, *Репин педагог*, (Москва, 1960), 89. Stasov, too, did not appreciate Malyavin's work. See 'Две декадентские выставки', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III:291. He later modified his views, however, after his reconciliation with Repin. See 'Счастлирое открытие', *Новости и Биржевая газета*, 1899, 16 ноября, № 316.
68. Tenisheva's autobiography provides information both on her studio, modelled along Parisian lines, and work at Talashkino: М. К. Тенишева, *Впечатления моей жизни*, (Париж, 1933). See also М. К. Тенишева, 'О Тенишевской студии', И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 325-326; and J. E. Bowlt, 'Two Russian Maecenases', *Apollo*, December 1973, 444-453.
69. Я. А. Чахров, 'Репин и его ученики в работе над коллективной картиной', *Художественное наследство*, II:226. А. А. Куренной, 'Воспоминания о И. Е. Репине', Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 172-190 is largely concerned with Repin's role at the Tenisheva studio.
70. Letter to Tretyakov, 26 November, 1895, *Письма И. Е. Репина. Переписка с П. М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 170-171.
71. Paul Sepp recorded that by 1899 Repin saw his students only 4-8 times a month. See above, n. 66. See И. А. Бродский, *Репин педагог*, (Москва, 1960), 73-91 on the bureaucratic in-fighting at the Academy.
72. О. А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 216-217.
73. Letter to I. I. Tolstoy, 27 September, 1907, *Репин. Письма*, II:235. Repin continued to write on educational matters, presenting a report to the Academy the following year suggesting improvements to the teaching methods. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 245.
74. 'Заявление И. Репина президенту академии художеств вел. кн. Владимиру', 20 октября, 1907, Бродский и Москвинов (Eds), *Op. cit.*, 16.
75. М. В. Добужинский, *Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1987), 184.

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76. Letter to Stasov, 9 May, 1906, *Репин. Письма*, II:213.
77. И.Е. Репин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Василий Суриков. Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 226.
78. In her introduction to the abridged, English version of her father's memoirs, Josephine Pasternak makes a case that turn of the century Russian art has long been misrepresented abroad by a preoccupation with *Mir iskusstva*, to the exclusion of the Muscovite artists based around Polenov. *Mir iskusstva*, she argues, consisted of eclectic and derivative decorators, rejuvenators of a jaded art scene, but in no way originators. Pasternak, like Repin, is one of many victims of this view of Russian art history. See 'Moscow and Petersburg', *The Memoirs of Leonid Pasternak*, (London, 1982), 1-3.
79. On *Mir iskusstva* generally see J.E. Bowlit, *The Silver Age: Russian Art of the Early twentieth century and the 'World of Art' Group*, (Newtonville, 1982), 2nd revised edition; J. Kennedy, *The 'Mir iskusstva' Group and Russian Art*, (New York, 1977). A. Haskell, *Diaghileff. His Artistic and Private Life*, (London, 1935), contains much useful information.
80. A. Haskell, *Op. cit.*, 110-111, 116-117.
81. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:124.
82. Letter to A.A. Kurennoi, 13 September, 1898, *Репин. Письма*, II:142. Repin was impressed with Diaghilev's staging of an exhibition of Russian and Finnish artists' work in St. Petersburg.
83. Letter to S.P. Diaghilev, late 1890s, *Ibid.*, II:160.
84. *Мир искусства*, 1899, № 1, 1-10, and № 3-4, 20-21 respectively.
85. И.Е. Репин, 'По адресу *Мир искусства*,' *Нива*, 1899, № 15, 298-300.
86. *Ibid.* Quoted in *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, III., 26-28. See also Repin's letter to M.V. Verevkin, 12 January, 1897, И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 57, against commercialism in art.
87. С.П. Дягилев, 'Письмо по адресу И.Е. Репина', *Mir iskusstva* 1899, № 10, 4-8.
88. В.В. Стасов, 'Чудо чудесное', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), III:270. First published in *Новости и биржевая газета*, 18 мая, 1899, № 135. Stasov had prepared the ground for this reconciliation the year before, stressing that Repin's departure from the Peredvizhniki had been solely on administrative grounds, and that he never renounced the Peredvizhnik style or technique: 'Выставки', *Ibid.*, III:216. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:115, also emphasises that 'reform' was the key to Repin entering a 'new' Academy.
89. В.В. Стасов, 'Чудо чудесное', *Op. cit.*, III:269.
90. Letter to L. Shestakova, 23 May, 1899, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, III:186.
91. Letter to Stasov, 27 July, 1899, *Репин. Письма*, II:153-154.
92. О.А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 223-225.
93. 'Брюлловское торжество', *Мир искусства*, 1899, № 23-24, 28-30. Репин, 'Миру искусства', *Россия*, 7 января, 1900, № 252, 3; 'И.Е. Репину', *Мир искусства*, 1900, № 1-2, 24-27.
94. See A. Hilton, *The Art of Ilya Repin*, (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1979), 280-287.

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95. See Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России 1900-1910-х годов*, (Москва, 1988), 245; C. Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art 1863-1922*, revised and enlarged edition, (London, 1986), 116, 118.

96. И. Е. Репин, 'Салон Издебского', *Биржевые ведомости*, 20 мая, 1910, № 11723, 5-6.

97. И. Е. Репин, 'В аду у Пифона', *Биржевые Ведомости*, 15 мая, 1910, 4-6. The exhibition was under the auspices of the journal *Apollon*, which reproduced Bakst's introduction to the exhibition catalogue: *Аполлон*, 1910, № 8. The same edition gave a very positive review to the Izdebsky Salon.

98. И. Е. Репин, 'В аду у Пифона', *Op. cit.*, 4-5.

99. Benois' work was first published as a separate chapter to R. Muther's *The History of Modern Painting*, (London, 1895-1896), III:407-453. It subsequently appeared in Russian as *История русской живописи в XIX в.*, (Ст. Петербург, 1901), and was published again in English as *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916). The chapter in Muther's work, written before Repin's unhappy alliance with *Mir iskusstva*, contains praise for Repin and the Peredvizhniki for their connections with contemporary French painting, which tends only to confirm that subsequent, revised editions, were planned with a tendentious motive.

100. L. O. Pasternak, *The Memoirs of Leonid Pasternak*, (London, 1982), 4.

101. Н. Б. Северова, *Интимные страницы*, (Ст. Петербург, 1910), 154-159. On Shchukin's collection, and that of the other modernist merchant collector, Ivan Morozov, see B. W. Kean, *All the Empty Palaces*, (London, 1983). Memoirs confirming Repin's dislike of artists such as Derain, Matisse, Cézanne, Picasso and Braque are easily found in Soviet literature. See for instance 'Отзыв о художнике Белом', И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 18; И. И. Мозалевский, 'Воспоминания о И. Е. Репине', *Ibid.*, 212.

102. И. Е. Репин, 'В. А. Серов', *Путь*, 1911, № 2, декабрь, 37-39. According to Pasternak, Serov was antipathetic to "extremist movements", notably the green shadows and violet contours of Matisse, and the "decomposition technique" of the Cubists, none of which appear in the portrait of Ida Rubinstein, a work which apart from its obviously 'modern' and, for Serov, uncharacteristic style, has little in common with Matisse's work. Л. О. Пастернак, *Записи разных лет*, (Москва, 1985), 132.

103. И. Е. Репин, 'О двух декадентствах - византийском и нашего времени', *Мир*, 1912, № 1, 69, 70.

104. A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 133, comments that Repin "spent his life over non-artistic problems." T. T. Rice, *A Concise History of Russian Art*, (London, 1963), 238, remarks on the tragedy of Repin's outlook and style "formed at a time when it was considered more important for artists to point a moral than to give form to a vision." G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1983), speaks of a great talent too often spent serving "the narrow aesthetic of the age". R. Auty and D. Obolensky, *Companion to Russian Studies 1. An Introduction to Russian*

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Art and Architecture, Cambridge U.P., 1976), 115, summarises that Repin "failed to respond to the aesthetic innovations of the early 1890s and condemned them without mitigation." A. Bird, *A History of Russian Painting*, (Oxford, 1987), 145-146, hammers the coffin tightly shut: "In art he was essentially conservative; emotionally he was superficial... Exploration meant nothing to him."

105. Benois in fact made an appeal to Repin to lift the tone of debate and to bear in mind the enormous weight attached to his every word, but without success: А. Бенуа, 'Разъяснения', *Речь*, 21 мая, 1910, № 137, 2.

106. С. Щербатов, *Художник в ушедшей России*, (New York, 1953), quoted in L.O. Pasternak, *The Memoirs of Leonid Pasternak*, (London, 1982), 2-3.

107. В.В. Стасов, 'Чудо чудесное', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), III: 271.

108. Letter to E.N. Antokolskaya, 7 August, 1894, *Репин. Письма*, II: 74.

109. Letter to Tretyakov, undated, 1892, *Письма И.Е. Репина. Переписка с П.М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 155.

110. R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, (New York, 1985), I: 246, entry for 15 April, 1899.

111. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 70.

112. В.В. Веревкина, 'Памяти учителя', *Художественное наследство*, II: 191.

113. E. Valkenier, 'La Tentation par Ilya Répine (1844-1930)', *Revue de Louvre*, 1981, Vol. 31, part 2, 131-133, gives a full account of the painting's evolution.

114. А.В. Жиркевич, 'Встречи с Репиным', *Художественное наследство*, II: 147-148.

115. E. Valkenier, 'La Tentation par Ilya Répine (1844-1930)', *Op. cit.*, 131. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), plate 160, illustrates a study of Christ and a scarcely visible winged phantom, set against a fiery sunset.

116. Д.И. Яворницкий, 'Воспоминания', *Художественное наследство*, II: 94. A prophetic statement considering that the canvas was destroyed by fire during the Second World War.

117. В.В. Стасов, 'Новая картина Репина', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III: 298.

118. R. Newmarch, *The Russian Arts*, (London, 1916), 152-153. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 100 illustrates a poor reproduction of the work, but one which is clearly in keeping with this description. Dobuzhinsky also listed the work amongst his least favourite: М.В. Добужинский, *Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1987), 184.

119. Letters between Repin and Chekhov on this and other matters are translated in F. and S.J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State U.P., 1980), 108-109. It transpired there was a moon.

120. Letter to T.L. Tolstoya, 27 June, 1896, *Репин. Письма*, II: 117.

121. Studies and variants generally are dealt with in И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 101-103. One variant of 1896 remains unlocated, whilst the second, that shown at the Venice International Exhibition, is in a

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private collection in New York. On the version of 1913 see И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:138, 142-143. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), Catalogue Nos. 247-249, deal with the first version. A related theme appears in *The Duel of Onegin and Lensky*, (The All-Union Pushkin Museum, Leningrad, 1901), G. Sternin, *Ibid.*, Catalogue No.269.

122. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 406-407. The visit is recalled in A. Tolstoy, *Tolstoy. A Life of My Father*, (Massachusetts, 1975), 375.

123. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:129-130.

124. Letter to E.P. Antokolskaya, 2 June, 1897, *Репин. Письма*, II:129.

125. О.А. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 195-196. Repin might possibly have found inspiration for his treatment of the theme in a similar work by Gérôme, *After the Ball* (Musée Condé, Chantilly, 1857). The painting exists in three version, one of which he could have seen in the Hermitage. See G.M. Ackerman, *Gérôme*, (London, 1986), Catalogue No. 77 for the Hermitage version.

126. В.В. Стасов, 'Чудо чудесное', *Избранные сочинения*, (Moscow, 1952), III:269.

127. Letter to T.L. Tolstoya, 18 April, 1892, *Репин. Письма*, I:424.

128. Letter to T.L. Tolstoya, 27 June, 1892, *Ibid.*, I:432-433.

129. Letter to T.L. Tolstoya, 10 August, 1892, *Ibid.*, I:436. *On the Southern Dvina. Sunrise*, (1892), is illustrated in И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), between 240-241. The portrait of Nadya as a hunter is in *Художественное наследство*, I:61. Also of interest, as informal outdoor scenes concerned with effects of light, are the portraits, *Yury Repin against the Bay of Naples* (Private Collection, New York, 1894), *Ibid.*, I:241, and another of Nadya, *Moonlit Night. Zdravnevo*, (Art Museum of the Byelorussian SSR, 1896), reproduced in G.Sternin, *Op. cit.*, 274.

130. Repin's title, *Барышни в стаде*, with its gentrified overtones, seems a conscious jibe at the family's new landowning status. A small black and white reproduction appears in G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, 273. Repin painted a similar theme, *Young Ladies in the Country*, now lost. *Ibid.*, 262.

131. А.П. Хотулев, 'Воспоминания о И.Е. Репине', И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 194, mentions Repin painting the work during a visit of June 1898. On the painting generally see И.Г. Романычева, *Академическая дача*, (Ленинград, 1947).

132. See G.Sternin, *Op. cit.*, Catalogue entries 50, 66, 129, for still lifes, and 19, 20, 46, 83, 84, 113, 122, 304, for landscapes. In his letter to Tatyana Tolstoy, (n.129 above), Repin commented that his landscapes never worked out. The Ateneum in Helsinki also has a rare example, *Winter Landscape* (1903), Inventory No. A II 1368.

133. C. Brinton, 'Russia's Greatest Painter. Ilya Repin', *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol.XL, November 1906, No.5, 522. R. Newmarch, *The Russian Arts*, (London, 1916), 156, complains that the unsuccessful treatment of gesture and costume detracted from the beauty of the landscape, resulting in unwarranted criticisms.

134. Letter to M.V. Verevkina, 24 February, 1903, *Репин. Письма*, II:172.

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135. В. В. Стасов, 'Новая картина Репина', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), III:301.

136. The events related here are covered in part in E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art: The Case of Repin', *Russian Review*, XXXVII, 1 (January), 23-24; and more fully in 'Il'ia Repin and David Burliuk', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 20, Nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1986), 55-62. The latter, part of a series of articles about David Burlyuk, contains much useful information but tends to be conciliatory towards Burlyuk and his contemporaries, with too much emphasis being given to Repin's amorous activities.

137. See D. V. Sarabyanov, *Russian Art from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde*, (London, 1990), 249-292, covering the hectic and often confusing art scene between 1910-1915.

138. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I:281 for a photograph of the damage prior to restoration.

139. E. Valkenier, 'Il'ia Repin and David Burliuk', *Op. cit.*, 57.

140. *Вечернее время*, 7 января, 1913 (old style).

141. A report of the address is in 'Чествование И. Е. Репина', *Искры*, (a supplement to *Русское слово*), 1913, № 43, 3 ноября, 338. See also С. Яблоновский, 'Покушение на Иоанна Грозного, И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 332-335.

142. After the canvas was restored Repin arrived at the Tretyakov Gallery, uninvited, and painted over the damage whilst Grabar, then Director of the Gallery, was absent — much as he had made alterations to *They Did Not Expect Him* in 1887. Grabar carefully wiped off the offending paintwork and nothing was said to Repin who, later on, in ignorance of Grabar's actions, was said to have been very pleased with the repainting. К. Чуковский, *Современники. Портреты и этюды*, (Москва, 1962), 647.

143. Repin's accusations regarding the complicity of Balashov and the futurists are in 'Слово к печати', *Русское слово*, 18 января, 1913. E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art', *Op. cit.*, 23, paraphrasing and quoting from *Аполлон* (see below n.149, wrongly cited as № 2), would lead one to think that the article is by Repin, and that he accuses the futurists of actually putting Balashov up to the deed. Though possible this seems hardly likely. Burlyuk's attacks on Repin and the *Peredvizhniki* dated back to 1908: See 'The Voice of an Impressionist: In Defense of Painting', reproduced in extract in J. E. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde. Theory and Criticism*, revised and enlarged edition, (London, 1988), 8-11.

144. David Burlyuk's anthology of poems, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, (*Пощечина общественному вкусу*), published in 1912 (according to some accounts 1913), was typical of the passionate, vituperative, but frequently incoherent manifestos which championed formal issues in art, deriding naturalism and advocating a purge on conventional museums. Extracts in J. E. Bowlt, *Op. cit.*, 69-77. Similar antics characterised the cultural scene. R. Hingley, *Pasternak*, (New York, 1983), 39-41, records a 'show down' between the opposing literary factions of Boris Pasternak and Vladimir Mayakovsky in 1914.

145. В. Д. Головчинер, 'Из истории популяризации репинского творчества в дореволюционные годы', *Художественное наследство*, II:390.

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М. Волошин, *О Репине*, (Москва, 1913), gives an account of the meeting and press reactions.

146. E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art', *Op. cit.*, 24. Though according to Е.В. Кириллина, *Репин в Пенатах*, (Ленинград, 1977), 128-129, Repin left the meeting before the debate, belatedly alerted to its mischievous purpose. Burlyuk subsequently published a bowdlerised collection of anti-modernist writings by Repin and Benois, together with some of his own diatribes: Д. Бурлюк, *Галящие. Бенуа и новое русское национальное искусство: разговор г. Бенуа и г. Репина об искусстве*, (Ст. Петербург, 1913).

147. L.O. Pasternak, *The Memoirs of Leonid Pasternak*, (London, 1982), 57.

148. Я. Тугендхольдъ, 'Московские выставки', *Аполлон*, 1913, № 3, 55-59.

149. 'Художественная летопись', *Аполлон*, 1913, № 3, 61.

150. К. Чуковский, *Современники. Портреты и этюды*, (Москва, 1962), 671-672. Chukovsky's *Чукоккала. Рукописный альманах Корнея Чуковского*, (Москва, 1979), is an intriguing facsimile of Chukovsky's handwritten almanack, with verses, sketches, cartoons and various *bon mots* by visitors, including Repin, Mayakovsky and other futurists.

151. Давид Бурлюк, 'Фрагменты воспоминаний', *Художественное наследство*, II: 279.

152. *Ibid.*, II: 281.

153. E. Valkenier, 'Il'ia Repin and David Burlyuk', *Op. cit.*, 62, quoting К. Чуковский, *Чукоккала*, 77.

154. Давид Бурлюк, 'Фрагменты воспоминаний', *Op. cit.*, II: 281.

155. И.Е. Репин, 'Воспоминания о Художнике', *Василий Суриков. Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 227-228.

156. Е.В. Кириллина, 'Репин и Маяковский', *Творчество И.Е. Репина и русское искусство 2-й половины XIX-XX веков*, (Ленинград, 1987), 29-36. *Художественное наследство*, I: 277, 285 reproduces two drawings of Repin by Mayakovsky. The writer is also seen in a photograph of a dinner at Penaty the same year: *Ibid.*, II: between 280-281.

157. К. Чуковский, *Современники*, 672.

158. Repin wrote a number of articles on his scheme for free art workshops: 'Деловой двор в Чугуеве', *Путь студенчества*, 1913, № 6, 26; 'Деловой двор', *Русское слово*, 1913, 27 ноября; 'Деловой двор', *Нива*, 1914, № 29, 79. See also В. Уманов-Каплуновский, 'К истории Делового двора И.Е. Репина в Чугуеве', *Исторический верстник*, 1915, № 4, 281.

Chapter 8. Repin at Penaty 1907-1930

1. See Russian bibliography, section 1. Some of Repin's writings predate this period, but the majority were part of a sustained campaign after 1908. Repin enjoyed writing but admitted that it did not come easily to him and so took much of his time. See Н.Г. Машковец, 'Литературное и эпистолярное наследство Репина', *И.Е. Репин. Сборник докладов*, (Москва, 1947), 206-223.

2. Е. Кириллина, *Репин в Пенатах*, (Ленинград, 1977), 77.

Information in English about the extraordinary Nordman can be found in F. and S.J. Parker, *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, (Penn. State U.P.,

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1980), 118-119, 121-126, who draw on unpublished material given to them by Kornei Chukovsky: see n.31, 145.

3. Е. Кириллина, 'О некоторых рисунках Репина', *Художник*, 1969, № 9, 49.

4. Repin illustrated Nordman's fictionalised account of her American adventures, *Беглянка*, serialised in *Нива*, beginning 1900, № 30, and later her novel *Крест материнства*. See А. Сидоров, *Русская графика начала XX века*, (Москва, 1969), 98 on Беглянка, and К. Чуковский, *Современники. Портреты и этюды*, (Москва, 1962), 652-653 generally. A definitive list is in А. Парамонов, *Иллюстрации И. Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 207.

5. И. А. Бунин, *Собрание сочинений*, (Москва, 1988), VI:233.

6. F. and S.J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 122-123.

7. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:135-136. History is silent as to how the eighty year old Stasov greeted this indignity.

8. К. Чуковский, *Op. cit.*, 651. The table, some of the notices and the flag are still at Penaty, lovingly restored, like the house, which was demolished during the Second World War.

9. И. Е. Репин, 'О Пенатах', И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 26-27. See also the photograph of a group of workers from the capital arriving at Penaty, *Ibid.*, between 176-77.

10. К. Чуковский, *Op. cit.*, 652.

11. А. Tolstoy, *Tolstoy. A Life of My Father*, (Massachusetts, 1976), 470.

12. The full memoirs, *Далекое близкое*, edited by Chukovsky, did not appear until after Repin's death, in 1937. The War and the Revolution delayed publication, but it seems too that Repin was suspicious of ideological liberties taken by Chukovsky, and held off publication hoping that the artist P. I. Neradovsky would edit the work. See letter to Neradovsky, 18 September, 1923, *Письма к художникам и художественным деятелям*, (Москва, 1952), 287-288.

13. Andreyev, who had a dacha nearby, experimented with an early form of colour photography, leaving a colour portrait of Repin and another of a dinner at the Andreyevs', including Repin and Nordman. See R. Davis, *Leonid Andreyev: Photographs by a Russian Writer*, (London, 1989), plates 27, 43.

14. F. and S.J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 124, wrongly suggest that Repin removed Nordman's placards and returned to eating meat.

15. Letter to V. Anofriev, April, 1920, quoted in Р. Круус, 'Два письма И. Е. Репина в Эстонию (1920г)', *Русская мысль*, № 3781, 23 июня 1989, XIII.

16. Д. Бурлюк, 'Фрагменты воспоминаний', *Художественное наследство*, II:280.

17. И. Е. Репин, 'Сестрица Наталья Борисовна', *Вегетарианское Обозрение*, Август-сентябрь, 1914 г., № 6-7, 204-209. I am grateful to Professor R.F. Christian of St. Andrews University for drawing my attention to this article.

18. К. Чуковский, 'Наталья Борисовна Нордман', *Op. cit.*, 648-644, is a strenuous defence of Nordman aimed to counteract the negative portraits elsewhere. Compare this with the brief, bad press in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:189.

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19. See В. Ф. Леви, 'И. Е. Репин в годы революции', *Художественное наследство*, I: 309-14 on these years, as well as М. А. Керзин, 'Воспоминания о И. Е. Репине', И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 275-277.
20. М. А. Керзин, *Op. cit.*, 275. A report of the jubilee appeared as 'Юбилей И. Е. Репина', *День*, 1917, 26 ноября.
21. Letter to S. V. Zhivotsky, *December 1919*, *Репин. Письма*, II: 326. The figure of 30,000 is quoted in И. Э. Грабарь, *Op. cit.*, 200-201.
22. В. Ф. Леви, 'И. Е. Репин в годы революции', *Op. cit.*, I: 310.
23. See Р. Круус, 'Два письма И. Е. Репина в Эстонию', *Op. cit.*, and И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 27-28 respectively.
24. В. Ф. Леви, 'И. Е. Репин в годы революции', *Op. cit.*, 314, lists exhibitions in Finland, America, France and Prague, though significantly none appear in the listings of Repin's exhibitions in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 289.
25. See И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 83. The lost portrait is illustrated in *Художественное наследство*, I: 241.
26. Letter to W. Peckham, 11 October, 1913, Бродский и Москвинов, *Op. cit.*, 114.
27. Letter to I. S. Ostroukhov, 6 July, 1924, *Репин. Письма*, II: 348. On Repin's possible losses at the 1921 exhibition see F. and S. J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 145, n. 29. See also the catalogue of that show, C. Brinton, *The Ilya Repin Exhibition*, (New York, 1921).
28. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 263.
29. Letter to S. Yaremich, 28 October, 1912, *Художественное наследство*, II: 388.
30. See letter to Chukovsky, 29 April, 1926, *Репин. Письма*, II: 373-375.
31. В. В. Веревкина, 'Памяти учителя', *Художественное наследство*, II: 191.
32. П. Полевой, 'Запорожцы, пишущие грамоту султану', *Нива*, 1892, № 3, 63-64.
33. К. Чуковский, *Репин. Воспоминания*, (Ленинград-Москва, 1945), 85. Quoted in F. and S. J. Parker, *Op. cit.*, 125-126.
34. Unpublished memoir by Eric Prehn.
35. А. М. Комашка, 'Три года с Репиным', *Художественное наследство*, II: 283-300. See especially 'Репин в мастерской', II: 283-287.
36. See chapter 6, n. 94. I am indebted to Yelena Kirillina, the Director of Penaty, for this information, especially so since Christie's describe the work as oil on canvas.
37. G. H. Hamilton, *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, (Harmondsworth, 1983), Third (integrated) edition, 386.
38. See chapter 6, n. 49.
39. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 170.
40. *Ibid.*, 143.
41. See G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, plate 5.
42. В. В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), II: 437.
43. Compare this with Polenov's tame painting on the theme for the same competition (Museum of the Academy of Arts, 1871): *Василий Дмитриевич Polenov. Письма, дневники, воспоминания*, (Москва, 1950), between 16-17.

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44. В.В. Стасов, 'Передвижная выставка 1871 года', *Op. cit.*, I:216.
45. Letter to Stasov, 3 June, 1872, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, I:38.
46. Репин, 'Иван Николаевич Крамской (Памяти учителя)', *Далекое близкое*, 151. See also letters to A.D. Chirkin, 27 December, 1873, and to V.M. Garshin, 16 February, 1878, *И.Н. Крамской. Письма, статьи в двух томах*, (Москва, 1965), I:219, 446-447.
47. Репин, 'Иван Николаевич Крамской (Памяти учителя)', *Op. cit.*, 151-152. This article, first published in 1888, is slightly at variance with reservations Repin expressed earlier, about the possible dangers of over-humanising the Son of God, leading to a purely atheistic rendition. Letter to Kramskoy, 17 February, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I:111.
48. Репин, 'Мои восторги', *Далекое близкое*, 465.
49. В.В. Стасов, 'Двадцать пять лет русского искусства. Наша живопись', *Op. cit.*, II:438.
50. Repin mentions starting the work in a letter to P.F. Iseev, 15 April, 1876, *И.А. Бродский и М.Н. Москвинов (Eds), Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 85-86.
51. Repin had been led to believe by emigre sources that the Bolsheviks had executed a number of his old friends, including Viktor Vasnetsov, Vasily Polenov, and Ilya Ostroukhov. Letter to K.I. Chukovsky, 19 July, 1923, *Репин. Письма*, II:338.
52. Letter to A.F. Koni, 15 April, 1921, *Ibid*, II:329. И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:240, suggests that Repin's joy at finding Koni alive is due to his recovery from a serious illness. The poet Igor Serevyanin wrote an ode on Repin's death, 'Poem of Mental Anguish', in 1919, about how Repin had starved to death during the 'Times of Trouble'. It is included in his 1920 collection, *Менестрель*, (Берлин, 1921). The two letters published in April 1920, in Estonia, were in refutation of the rumours of Repin's death: P. Круус, 'Два письма И.Е. Репина в Эстонию (1920г)', *Русская мысль*, № 3781, 23 июня 1989, XIII. See also E. Rimbault Dibdin, 'The State Gallery of H.H. the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda', *Connoisseur*, Vol.57, No.13, (May-August), 1920, 13, which states that Repin died in 1918, a victim of War famine.
53. The latter appears to be Repin's invention. The scene closely follows events in Job II:11-13, but no mention is made of a dog licking Job's sores, here or elsewhere. Repin probably interpolated the reference to the dogs licking Lazarus's sores: Luke, 16:21.
54. Psalm 22, 16 and 20. As symbols of uncleanness and terms of abuse, see I Samuel 24:14, II Samuel 16:9, I Kings 14:2, 16:4, 21:24, 22:38, Mark 7:28, Philipians 3:2 and Revelation 22:15. I am most grateful to Deborah Annesley for locating these references, and for the benefit of her wide knowledge on their significance.
55. Г. Ге, 'Воспоминания о художнике Н.Н. Ге, как материал для его биографии', *Артист*, № 44, 135. Quoted in D.V. Sarabyanov, *Russian Art from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde*, (London, 1990), 130. For examples see Н.Ю. Зорграф, *Николай Ге*, (Москва, 1974), plates 106, 107-109, 112.
56. Letter to A.F. Koni, 29 June, 1921, *Репин. Письма*, II:331.
57. See above n.52. There has long been a dispute as to the dating of this work, which, along with the artist's signature, is painted as

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if engraved into the rock behind Christ. It appears to read either 1922 or 1925, postdating the letters between Repin and Koni, but confirms later re-workings. See И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:325.

58. Р. Крюс, 'Два письма И.Е. Репина в Эстонию (1920г)', *Op. cit.*, and letter to Stasov, 16 February, 1881, *Репин. Письма*, I:244 respectively. Letter to D.I. Yavornitsky, 26 December, 1927, *Ibid.*, II:395 on Repin's regrets at being too ill to attend church. Even Grabar does not deny the artist's late religious revival: И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:146. Repin also clearly received an Orthodox burial since unpublished photographs of the funeral, received by me from the Estonian art historian Yüri Hain, show the Orthodox cross on the grave, where a plinth and a bust of Repin now stand.

59. Letter to A.F. Koni, 4 July, 1921, *И.Е. Репин. Письма к художникам и художественным деятелям*, (Москва, 1952), 226. In conversation with staff at Penaty about *The Morning of the Resurrection*, their opinion was that it, and other works of the period, are the results of experimentation, not failing health.

60. T. Colliander, *Ilya Repin. En konstuar fran Ukraina*, (Stockholm, 1942), 265.

61. For illustrations see *Художественное наследство*, I:307 for the painting, and G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, 282 for a small reproduction of the pen and ink sketch. On Ivanov and Blake see J.E. Bowlt, 'Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century', *Art and Culture in Nineteenth Century Russia*, Ed. T.G. Stavrou, (Indiana U.P., 1983), 129. Illustrations in М.М. Алленов, *Александр Андреевич Иванов*, (Москва, 1980), 154, 158-159, 197 in particular.

62. See И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:206-208.

63. See О.А. Ляковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 21-22 especially, quoting selectively from early correspondence between Repin and Stasov.

64. В.В. Стасов, 'Просветитель по части художества', *Op. cit.*, III:209.

65. Л.Н. Толстой и художники, (Москва, 1978), 98, 141. Quoted in E. Valkenier, 'La Tentation par Ilya Répine (1844-1930)', *La Revue du Louvre*, April, 1981, No.2, 133.

66. Letter to V.G. Chertkov, 2 May, 1885, in R.F. Christian, *Tolstoy's Letters*, (London, 1978), II:381. The picture is not identified here, but is mentioned in A. Tolstoy, *Tolstoy. A Life of My Father*, (Massachusetts, 1975), 277, who quotes from the same letter. I have been unable to locate a reproduction of this work.

67. V.D. Polenov, letter to his family, December 1873, В.Д. Поленов. Е.Д. Поленова, *Хроника семьи художников*, (Москва, 1964), 106.

68. Letter to Tolstoy, 21 March, 1898, *Репин. Письма*, II:138.

69. Repin illustrated *The Diary of a Madman*, *Taras Bulba* and *The Story of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich*, (as well as designing the stage make-up for the play). Information on Repin's illustrations to Gogol can be found in A. Paramonov, *Иллюстрации И.Е. Репина*, (Москва, 1952), 13-62, 181-184; А. Сидоров, *Русская графика начала XX века*, (Москва, 1969), 98; И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:183; I. Chepik, 'Repin the Illustrator', *Soviet Literature*, 1980, No.9, 176-178; Е. Журавлева, 'Творчество И.Е. Репина', *Искусство*, 1936, №5, 5.

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70. I have been unable to locate even a reasonable illustration of this work which, due to its dark colouration, reproduces very badly. See И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:137 for a typically poor example.

71. See А. Парамонов, *Op. cit.*, 13-16, 184-187.

72. See В. Голубев, *Пушкин в изображении Репина*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1936), 7-14, and N. Novouspensky, *Aivazovsky*, (London-Leningrad, 1980), plate 92, for a good reproduction.

73. The Prague portrait of 1912 is reproduced in И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), between 312-313. Information on, and an illustration of, *The Epoch of Pushkin* is in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Новонайденные произведения Репина', *Огонек*, 1949, № 32, 18.

74. On the painting and its reception see В. Голубев, *Op. cit.*, 39-67. Morozov's criticisms, in the form of an open letter to Repin, appeared in *Биржевые ведомости*, 1912, 20 ноября.

75. Letter to P. O. Morozov, 20 January, 1912, *Репин. Письма*, II:285.

76. In conversation with staff at Penaty I was informed that Repin worked on the canvas right up to the time of his death in 1930, although by then he was merely applying more layers of paint.

77. И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II:244-246. The work, in an early incarnation, was shown at the 39th Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1911.

78. Letter to L. N. Andreyev, 28 January, 1917, *Репин. Письма*, II:317-318. According to Repin he began the work in 1897.

79. The painting is clearly visible in a photograph of Repin at work in his studio, reproduced in В. Репина, 'Из детских воспоминания дочери И. Е. Репина', *Нива*, 1914, № 29, 572. Regrettably this is another instance where an illustration of the 'finished' work is unavailable.

80. Letter to L. N. Andreyev, 28 January, 1917, *Op. cit.*, II:317.

81. Letter to A. Kurennoi, 3 January, 1909, *Репин. Письма*, II:247.

82. Letter to D. I. Yavornitsky, 24 February, 1909, *Ibid.*, II:251.

83. Respectively in a letter to William Peckham, 1 October, 1913, И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 114; and G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 246.

84. О. А. Лясковская, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 219-220. According to Е. В. Кириллина, 'Репин и Маяковский', *Творчество И. Е. Репина и русское искусство 2-й половины XIX-XX веков*, (Ленинград, 1987), 34, a sketch of Mayakovsky was incorporated into the work.

85. G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, 243.

86. C. Brinton, *The Ilya Repin Exhibition*, (New York, 1921), plate 2. Plates 3, 4 and 5 for the studies. The work is here erroneously dated 1897.

87. Repin identified the tempestuous sea and wild ecstasy of the Cossacks as the chief components of the work in a letter of 31 October, 1910, to G. S. Petrov, a member of the State Council, who had written well of the painting. *Репин. Письма*, II:270.

88. The staff at Penaty, currently compiling a complete listing of Repin's works, have themselves no colour reproduction of this canvas, a fact confirmed in Е. В. Кириллина, 'Репин и Маяковский', *Op. cit.*,

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34. Two more studies appear in G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, Catalogue Nos. 300, 301.

89. Letter to A. N. Rimsky-Korsakov, 26 October, 1927, *Репин. Письма*, II: 394. See also letter to K. I. Chukovsky, 18 May, 1927, *Ibid.*, II: 389, on dedicating the work to Musorgsky.

90. Letters to I. I. Brodsky, 10 May, 1926, and to K. I. Chukovsky, 18 May, 1927, *Ibid.*, II: 376, 389.

91. See И. Карпинский, 'Три неизвестных портрета', *Родина*, № 6, 1973, ноябрь-декабрь, 13-15, on the portrait of Mme Skilondz. *Lezginka* is mentioned in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 236, but no indication is given as to its location.

92. Г. Ю. Стернин, *Художественная жизнь России 1900-1910-х годов*, (Москва, 1988), 19.

93. See letters to A. F. Koni, 15 April and 29 June, 1921, *Репин. Письма*, II: 329, 331, and И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 206-208, 241-243 generally. For Finnish readers A. Reitala, 'Ystävyttä politiikan varjossa', *Taide*, (Helsinki), 1979, No. 6, 4-11, gives a detailed account of the painting.

94. See В. Бондаренко, 'Галлен глазами России', *Север*, 1977, № 12, 104-110, and V. Bondarenko, 'Ystävyys joka syntyi pohjolassa', *Taide*, 1980, № 3, (Helsinki), 36-37, on Repin and Gallen-Kallela, and on the Finnish artist's relationship to Russian art generally. I am grateful to Erja Pusa, Exhibition Secretary of the Gallen-Kallela Museum, Helsinki, for bringing these articles to my attention and supplying me with copies.

95. Letter to K. I. Chukovsky, 21 January, 1926, quoted in И. С. Зильберштейн, 'Репин в работе над портретом Ф. И. Шаляпина', *Художественное наследство*, II: 375. See also between 368-369 for a good photograph of Repin at work on the portrait.

96. 'Ответ И. Е. Репина на поздравления в связи с его восьмидесятилетием', 25 July, 1924, *Репин. Письма*, II: 349-350.

97. Letter to Stasov, 27 July, 1899, *Ibid.*, II: 153.

98. Letter to K. I. Chukovsky, 18 May, 1927, *Ibid.*, II: 389.

99. See letters to K. I. Chukovsky, *Ibid.*, and to D. I. Yavornitsky, 26 December, 1927, *Ibid.*, II: 396. See also И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, II: 209-210.

100. К. Чуковский, *Илья Репин. Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1936), 10-12.

Conclusion

1. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 147. See 165-193 on the Soviet appropriation of the Peredvizhnik school generally.

2. See chapter 5, n. 206.

3. E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 169-171.

4. П. М. Сысоев, 'И. Е. Репин как представитель революционного народничества', *Новый мир*, 1934, № 10, 245-272; 'Революционное народническое наследие И. Е. Репина', *Коммунистическая молодежь*, 1934, № 13/14, 106-109. See Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 170-171 on Sysoyev's conversion from an objective to a propagandising art historian.

5. See especially the introductory article by Г. Недошивин и М. Нейман, 'Илья Ефимович Репин. Великий реалист', *Искусство*, 1936, № 4, 1-13.

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6. E. Valkenier, *Op. cit.*, 175, 179.
7. А. Герасимов, 'Чего мы можем учиться у Репина?', *Советское искусство*, 17 мая, 1936.
8. Of course Repin's correspondence was not (and has not been) published in a complete form.
9. В. А. Лянин, 'Проблемы изучения творчества И. Е. Репина', *Творчество И. Е. Репина и русское искусство 2-й половины XIX-XX веков*, (Ленинград, 1987), 3-6.
10. G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin*, (Leningrad, 1985), 99.
11. A. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, (Glasgow, 1974), I:557.
12. See R. Hare, *The Art and Artists of Russia*, (London, 1965), for a writer extremely contemptuous of realist art, especially 213, 216, for passages bordering on an hysterical hatred.
13. See for instance T. T. Rice, *A Concise History of Russian Art*, (London, 1963), 232-233; M. Chamot, *Russian Painting and Sculpture*, (Oxford, 1963), 22-23; R. Auty and D. Obolensky, *An Introduction to Russian Art and Architecture*, (Cambridge U.P., 1980), 133. See also the items under 'Wanderers' in the *Dictionary of Art and Artists*, (London, 1984), 340, and the *Dictionary of Art Terms*, (London, 1984), 198. E. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, is the exception since the object of her work is the first judicious assessment of the Peredvizhniki: see especially 37-43. Most culpable is the revised edition of Camilla Gray's *The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863-1922*, (London, 1986), 9, which makes many references to Valkenier's work in the revised sections but asserts that the *Artel* members "called themselves 'the Wanderers'." The same innaccuracy is repeated in I. Golomstock, 'Realism in Russian Art. Very much a Russian Story', *Survey*, 23/4, 1977-1978, 206, a lengthy review of Valkenier's book which nevertheless repeats one of the chief myths she seeks to bury.
14. A. Benois, *The Russian School of Painting*, (London, 1916), 131-135.
15. *Ibid.*, 132. See also 'Брюлловское торжество', *Мир искусства*, 1899, № 23-24, 2:28-30.
16. A. Bird, *A History of Russian Painting*, (Oxford, 1987), 142-146. I have used several quotations from this book not because it differs fundamentally from previous histories, indeed in respect of Repin's apolitical and independent nature it is most equitable, but because it postdates over a decade of well-researched, even-handed exposés of Soviet mythologising (see below, n.58), and would seem therefore more neglectful. Valkenier's *Russian Realist Art* is again cited in several places without, it seems, having regard to its findings. In describing this as the most recent history of Russian art I am disregarding D. V. Sarabyanov, *Russian Art from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde*, (London, 1990), written by an eminent Soviet scholar.
17. Репин, 'Письма об искусстве', *Далекое близкое*, 453.
18. И. А. Бродский и М. Н. Москвинов (Eds), *Новое о Репине*, (Ленинград, 1969), 287.
19. See Chekhov's letter to M. I. Tchaikovsky, 16 March, 1890, А. П. Чехов, *Полное собрание сочинений и писем*, (Москва, 1949) 15:36. On Repin's standing amongst writers see Г. Прибульская, *Репин в Петербурге*, (Ленинград, 1970), 178-180.

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20. A. Causey, 'Art and Revolutionary Society: Factions and Debates', *Tradition and Revolution in Russian Art. Leningrad in Manchester*, Catalogue of the exhibition at Manchester, 16 June-22 July 1990, (Manchester, 1990), 23.
21. D.V. Sarabyanov, *Op. cit.*, 136-145. See also 111-132 on the *Peredvizhniki*.
22. Letter to Repin, 20 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 341-342.
23. В.В. Стасов, 'Илья Ефимович Репин', *Избранные сочинения*, (Москва, 1952), I: 262-268.
24. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 October, 1874, *Репин. Письма*, I: 143.
25. Letter to Stasov, 28 April, 1874. Quoted in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 235.
26. 'В защиту новой Академии художеств', *Книжки недели*, 1897, № 10, 5-32.
27. В.В. Стасов, 'Выставки', *Op. cit.*, III: 218.
28. See *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, (Oxford, 1980), 167.
29. See chapter 2, n. 85.
30. Letter to E.N. Zvantseva, 27 August, 1890, *Репин. Письма*, I: 374.
31. See G. Sternin, *Op. cit.*, 278, Catalogue No. 285, *Sleeping Woman*, which is inscribed on the reverse with instructions as to the style and colour of frame as well as a note not to varnish the work, since this would destroy its general harmony.
32. Letter to T.L. Tolstoy, 27 June, 1896, *Репин. Письма*, II: 116.
33. Letter to Kramskoy, 29 August, 1875, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 345.
34. Репин, 'Письма об искусстве', *Далекое близкое*, 422, 453.
35. Letter to M.V. Verevkina, 24 February, 1903, *Репин. Письма*, II: 173.
36. Репин, *Далекое близкое*, 254, 257-258.
37. Я.А. Тепин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Василий Суриков: Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 201.
38. 'Петербургские письма', *Московские ведомости*, 18 марта, 1883, № 77.
39. A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1960), 110.
40. L. Nochlin, *Realism*, (Harmondsworth, 1982), 50.
41. See above, Chapter 4, n. 162.
42. С. Яремич, *Биржевые ведомости*, Ст. Петербург, № 14983, 24 июня, 1915. Quoted in J. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde. Theory and Criticism*, revised and enlarged edition, (London, 1988), xx-xxi.
43. Letter to Stasov, quoted in И.Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, I: 166.
44. Letter to A.N. Rimsky-Korsakov, 26 October, 1927, *Репин. Письма*, II: 394.
45. Letter to N.I. Murashko, 30 November, 1883, *Ibid.*, I: 292.
46. Letter to M.V. Verevkina, 20 August, 1895, *Ibid.*, II: 108.
47. Letter to Stasov, 27 July, 1899, *Репин. Письма*, II: 153.
48. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 December, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II: 275.
49. Letter to N.I. Murashko, *Op. cit.*, n. 45.
50. Letter to P.M. Tretyakov, 8 March, 1883, *Письма И.Е. Репина. Переписка с П.М. Третьяковым, 1873-1898*, (Москва-Ленинград, 1946), 62.

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51. For the latest accusation see A. Causey, 'Art and Revolutionary Society: Factions and debates', *Op. cit.*, 23.

52. E. Valkenier, 'Politics in Russian Art: The Case of Repin', *Russian Review*, XXXVII, 1 (January), 24.

53. On the pre-eminence of serious art see letter to S.P. Diaghilev, late 1890s, *Репин. Письма*, II:160. On the priority of artistic integrity see letter to Stasov, 30 October, 1891, *Репин-Стасов. Переписка*, II:158. See also M.B. Добужинский, *Воспоминания*, (Москва, 1987), 150, 184, paying tribute, despite reservations on Repin's work, to his sincere artistic spirit.

54. Letter to M.P. Fyodorov, 4 May, 1886, *Репин. Письма*, I:311. Repin used the same ending phrase, in a different context, concerning the failure of *St. Nicholas of Myra*: "Ah, it should all have been so completely different. You cannot escape from yourself!!!" V.V. Verekina, 'Памяти учителя', *Художественное наследство*, II:191.

55. И.Е. Репин, 'Мысли об искусстве', *Новый Путь*, 1903, январь, № 5, quoted in О.А. Ляскова, *Илья Ефимович Репин*, (Москва, 1953), 212-213.

56. Репин, 'Воспоминания о художнике', *Василий Суриков: Письма. Воспоминания о художнике*, (Ленинград, 1977), 224-228.

57. A. Benois, *Memoirs*, (London, 1964), 125.

58. Professors Elizabeth Valkenier and Alison Hilton have written widely, appreciatively, but not unquestioningly on 19th century Russian art, and on Repin in particular. When I was initially canvassing for information for this thesis in 1987, Professor John Bowlt, a Western authority on Russian art who wrote a negative appraisal of Repin's work in R. Auty and D. Obolensky, *An Introduction to Russian Art and Architecture*, (Cambridge, U.P., 1980), 115, was happy to admit that his attitude had changed significantly during the intervening years, simply because he had had more opportunity of seeing Repin's works at close quarters.

59. Large exhibitions have been staged in Finland, where Repin is already well known, the last being the exhibition at Retretti in 1989 which comprised 120 works together with a selection of those by his pupils. *Burlaki* was shown in Tokyo in 1977, but so far as is known works such as *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*, *They Did Not Expect Him*, and the portrait of Musorgsky, have not been exhibited outside of their homeland. *The Zaporozhye Cossacks* was last seen in the West in Chicago, 1893.

60. Letter to Kramskoy, 16 December, 1873, *Крамской. Переписка*, II:275.

* * * * *

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BIBLIOGRAPHY SECTION I. FIRST HAND, CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS

Due to the inordinate amount of literature pertaining to Repin this bibliography has been divided into separate and more manageable sections along the lines listed below. The second section, in keeping with the main body of this thesis, is divided thematically, to include books and articles related to a specific aspect of Repin's art, or to a single canvas. This has allowed the inclusion of many items often hidden within larger collections of writings and is intended to provide an easy access to information on individual topics and paintings.

1. Firsthand, contemporary writings: 389-390.
 - a) Autobiographical writings contained in *Далеко близкое*.
 - b) Letters and correspondence between Repin and his contemporaries.
2. Thematic Bibliography: 390-401
 - a) Books and articles relating to a specific theme.
 - b) Books and articles relating to a specific painting.
3. Books and articles of a general nature relating to Repin: 401-404.
4. Books and articles not specifically related to Repin: 404-409.
5. Exhibition Catalogues: 409-410.
6. Bibliographies - Works of Reference: 410

Within each section works in Cyrillic are listed first, followed by works in all other languages. This bibliography is not intended to be exhaustive, nor has it been possible or desirable to consult all of the works listed. In particular the legion of uniform Soviet monographs has been considerably thinned down. The majority of works listed below reflect those I have found most useful, but where an item is of a specific nature, e.g. on Repin's connections with the Russian ballet, it has been included, even though not consulted, as being of possible interest to readers concerned with interrelated disciplines.

An extensive list of Repin's own writings is included in the eighth edition of *Далеко Близкое*, (Leningrad, 1982), 501-512. Comprehensive bibliographical information can also be found in И. Э. Грабарь, *Репин*, (Москва, 1963-1964), II:299-309, and G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting and Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1982), 283-287.

b) Letters and correspondence between Repin and his contemporaries

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SECTION 5. EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

An extensive but incomplete list of Repin's exhibitions can be found in G. Sternin, *Ilya Repin. Painting, Graphic Arts*, (Leningrad, 1985), 288-291. The following are listed chronologically. The abbreviations ГТГ and ГРМ stand respectively for the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, and the Russian Museum, Leningrad.

Repin

- И. Е. Репин. *Каталог выставки картин, портретов, эскизов и этюдов*, (Ст. Петербург, 1891).
- И. Е. Репин. *Каталог юбилейной выставки произведений*. ГТГ, (Москва, 1924).
- И. Е. Репин. *Каталог юбилейной выставки*. ГРМ, (Ленинград, 1925).
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- И. Е. Репин. *Выставка произведений. Каталог*, (Ленинград, 1937).
- И. Е. Репин. *Каталог выставки произведений к 100-летию со дня рождения*, Eds. Н. Ю. Зограф, А. М. Лесюк и А. И. Ульянинская, (Москва, 1944).
- И. Е. Репин. *Выставка произведений. Пермь 1944. Каталог*, (Пермь, 1944).
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Russian and Soviet Painting, Catalogue of exhibition at Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, (New York, 1977).

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SECTION 6. BIBLIOGRAPHIES - WORKS OF REFERENCE

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1844 July 24: born in Chuguyev, Kharkov Province.
- 1854 Enters the Military Topographical School.
- 1857 Apprenticed to the icon painter Ivan Bunakov.
- 1859-63 Works on church commissions in Kharkov and Voronezh Provinces.
- 1863 Arrives in St. Petersburg. Enrols at the Drawing School of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists. Becomes acquainted with Kramskoy and the *Artel*.
- 1864 Formally accepted as a student at the Imperial Academy.
- 1868 Becomes acquainted with Stasov.
- 1869 Receives a Minor Gold Medal for *Job and His Friends*.
- 1870 First trip to the Volga, collecting materials for *Burlaki*.
- 1871 Receives a Major Gold Medal for *Christ Raising Jairus's Daughter from the Dead*. Works on *Slavonic Composers*, *Burlaki*.
- 1872 Marries Vera Shevtsova. Becomes acquainted with Tretyakov.
- 1873 Exhibits *Burlaki* at the Academy. Receives a three-year scholarship for foreign travel. Visits Venice and Italy, settles in Paris. Begins work on *Sadko*.
- 1874 First exhibits with the Peredvizhniki. Works on *A Parisian Café* and Turgenev's portrait. Summer: working in Veules.
- 1875 Exhibits *A Parisian Café* at the Salon. Visits London.
- 1876 Returns to St. Petersburg. Paints *On a Turf Seat*. Receives the title of Academician for *Sadko*. Begins *A Peasant with an Evil Eye*, *A Cautious One* and *The Archdeacon* in Chuguyev.
- 1877 Moves to Moscow.
- 1878 Works on *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*, *Examination in a Village School* and *Tsarevna Sofya*. Joins the Peredvizhniki. Summer at Abramtsevo. Paints studies for *Seeing Off a Recruit* and the first pencil sketch for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*.
- 1879 Exhibits *Tsarevna Sofya* at the 7th Peredvizhnik. Summer at Abramtsevo. Works on portraits of the Mamontov family, *Seeing Off a Recruit*, and first sketches for *Spurning Confession*.
- 1880 Tours the Ukraine with Serov, collecting materials for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*. First meeting with Tolstoy in Moscow.
- 1881 Paints portrait of Musorgsky. Attends public execution in St. Petersburg of Alexander II's assassins. Begins studies for *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk*.
- 1882 Returns to live in St. Petersburg. Instigates watercolour sessions with young artists, including Serov and Vrubel.
- 1883 Exhibits *Religious Procession in the Province of Kursk* at the 11th Peredvizhnik. Tours Europe with Stasov: Germany, Holland, France, Spain and Italy. Begins *They Did Not Expect Him*.

- 1884 Exhibits *They Did Not Expect Him* at the 12th Peredvizhnik. Summer: works on *Ivan the Terrible*.
- 1885 Exhibits *Ivan the Terrible* at the 13th Peredvizhnik. Commissioned to paint *Alexander III Receives the District Headmen*.
- 1886 Gives *Spurning Confession* to the poet Nikolai Minsky.
- 1887 Visits Italy. Paints Tolstoy's portrait at Yasnaya Polyana.
- 1888 Works on *St. Nicholas of Myra Delivers the Three Innocent Men*. Travels with his son Yury through Southern Russia, collecting materials for *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*.
- 1889 Continues to work on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*. Visits Paris, London, Zurich and Munich with Stasov.
- 1890 Elected to the Government Commission considering reforms to the Academy. Continues to work on *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*.
- 1891 Resigns from the Peredvizhniki. Stays at Abramtsevo and Yasnaya Polyana. Major retrospective of 298 of Repin's works, held jointly with Ivan Shishkin at the Academy. Exhibits *The Zaporozhye Cossacks*. Begins work on *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!*
- 1892 Retrospective exhibition moves to Moscow. Buys the estate of Zdravnevo near Vitebsk. Paints family portraits, including *Autumn Bouquet*. Accepts a professorship at the Academy.
- 1893 Travels through Western Europe to study artistic teaching methods. Writes his *Letters on Art*.
- 1894 Ceases correspondence with Stasov. Teaching at the Academy.
- 1895 Works on *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* and *The Duel*. Begins teaching at Princess Tenisheva's art studio.
- 1896 Goes to Moscow for Nicholas II's coronation. Continues work on *The Duel*. Organises the *Exhibition of Experiments*.
- 1897 Rejoins the Peredvizhniki.
- 1898 Visits Tolstoy in Moscow. Tours Constantinople and Jerusalem. Death of Tretyakov.
- 1899 Exhibits with *Mir iskusstva*. Becomes a member of the magazine's editorial board but dissociates himself from criticisms which appear in the first edition. Purchases Penaty. Working on *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* and *Pushkin on the Banks of the Neva*. First signs of debilitation to his right hand. Travels widely in the Caucasus. Meets Gorky and paints his portrait. Becomes acquainted with Natalya Nordman.
- 1900 Still working on *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* Visits Paris with Natalya Nordman.
- 1901 Receives the Legion of Honour from the French Government. Public demonstration at the 29th Peredvizhnik in front of Repin's portrait of Tolstoy at Prayer, following Tolstoy's excommunication. Stays at Yasnaya Polyana. Receives commission for *State Council*.

- 1903 Exhibits *Wide World* at the 31st Peredvizhnik. Settles at Kuokkala. Concludes work on *State Council*.
- 1904 *Get Thee Behind Me Satan!* exhibited at the 32nd Peredvizhnik.
- 1905 Begins work on a number of themes related to the events of Bloody Sunday. Signs a collective appeal for judicial and administrative reforms. Resigns from the Academy.
- 1906 Builds the studio at Penaty. Works on *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast*. Is enticed back to the Academy. Death of Stasov.
- 1907 Resigns permanently from the Academy. Visits Yasnaya Polyana and Chuguyev. Working on *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast*.
- 1908 Exhibits *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast* at the 37th Peredvizhnik in Moscow.
- 1909 Works on *Tolstoy in the Pink Armchair*, *The Self-Immolation of Gogol*, *The Manifestation on 17th October 1905*, *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast*, *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*.
- 1910 Commissioned to paint *Pushkin on the Lyceum Speech Day*. Publishes *In Hell with Python* and *The Izdebsky Salon*, attacks on modernist trends in art.
- 1913 *Ivan the Terrible* vandalised by Abram Balashov. Futurists' debate on Repin's art. Celebrations to mark the picture's restoration.
- 1913-14 Works on a scheme for free art workshops in Chuguyev which is put aside after Russia enters the War. 1914: death of Natalya Nordman. First meeting with David Burlyuk.
- 1915 Summer: meets with Mayakovsky, Burlyuk and other 'futurists'.
- 1916 Decides to publish his collected memoirs. Still working on *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*.
- 1917 The Russian Revolution. Still working on *Pushkin on the Banks of the Neva*. Celebration in honour of Repin's 45th anniversary of artistic activity.
- 1918 Frontier between Russia and Finland closes.
- 1919 Works on *Religious Procession in an Oak Forest*, *Cossacks from the Black Sea Coast* and *Pushkin on the Banks of the Neva*.
- 1921 Works on *The Morning of the Resurrection*, *Doubting Thomas*, *Golgotha* and *The Finnish Celebrities*.
- 1922 Repin's daughter Vera moves to Penaty.
- 1924 An exhibition in Moscow marks Repin's 80th birthday.
- 1926 Works on *Gopak*. Delegation of Soviet artists visits Penaty.
- 1927-29 Continues to work on *Gopak*.
- 1930 July: celebrates 86th birthday. September 29: dies and is buried in the grounds of Penaty.